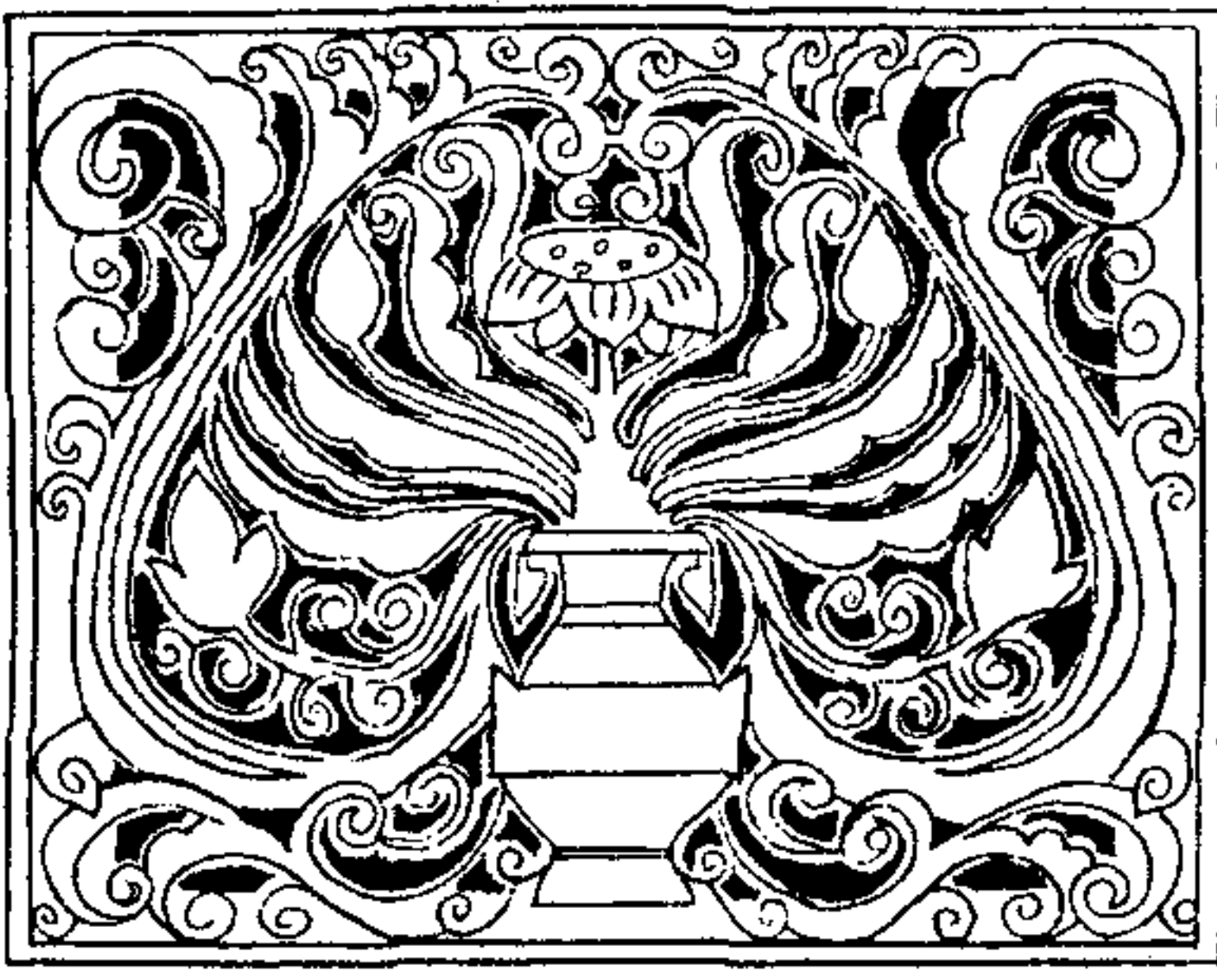




PRABUDDHA BHARATA

A Monthly Journal of the
Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

Editorial Office
P.O. Mayavati, Via : Lohaghat
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Rates of Subscription

(inclusive of Postage)

	Annual	Life (20 Years)
India	Rs. 45	Rs. 500
Sri Lanka & Bangladesh	Rs. 120	Rs. 2000
U.S.A. & Canada		
<i>Air Mail</i>	\$20	\$300
Other Countries		
<i>Air Mail</i>	£15	£225

Cover: Sri Ramakrishna Temple
Belur Math
Inset: Prayer Hall

MAY 1998

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उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 103

MAY 1998

No. 5

Divine Wisdom

THE COMPLETION OF DAKSHA'S SACRIFICE (Hymns in Praise of Sri Hari)

योगेश्वरा ऊचुः
प्रेयान्न तेऽन्योऽस्त्यमुतस्त्वयि प्रभो
विश्वात्मनीक्षेत्र पृथग्य आत्मनः।
अथापि भक्त्येशतयोपधावताम्
अनन्यवृत्त्यानुगृहाण वत्सल॥

The Yogiswaras said: There is none dearer to Thee than the devotee who sees Thee, the Soul of all, as non-separate from his own being (or as the all-inclusive Being of whom his own self is an inseparable part). Yet, O Lord! O Dear one! Bless us who contemplate Thee with unswerving devotion! For we feel the need of the support of Thy blessing to succeed in our efforts.

जगदुद्ववस्थितिलयेषु दैवतो
बहुभिद्यमानगुणयाऽऽत्ममायया।
रचितात्मभेदमतये स्वसंस्थया
विनिवर्तितभ्रमगुणात्मने नमः॥

In the work of creation, preservation and destruction of the worlds, Thou, acting in accordance with the Karma of Jivas, dost manifest Thyself as the world of differences through Thy inherent and mysterious power of Maya. Yet all these changes do not affect Thee in the least, and Thou remainest as the transcendent Self beyond all the mutations caused by the *gunas* of *Prakṛti*. Salutations to Thee!

ब्रह्मोवाच
नमस्ते श्रितसत्त्वाय धर्मादीनां च सूतये।
निर्गुणाय च यत्काष्ठां नाहं वेदापरेऽपि च॥

Sabda-Brahma said: Salutations to Him who, embodied in the form of *Śuddha-sattva*, revealest the *Dharma*, but who at the same time, is the Impersonal and the Absolute Being, transcending all forms and all the *gunas* of *Prakṛti*. How the same being can be simultaneously both Personal and Impersonal, with *gunas* and without *gunas*, is a mystery regarding Thy ultimate nature, to which no philosophy, including that of the Veda, can give a final solution.

विद्याधरा ऊचुः
त्वन्माययार्थमभिपद्य कलेवरेऽस्मिन्
कृत्वा ममाहमिति दुर्मतिरुत्पथैः स्वैः।
क्षिप्तोऽप्यसद्विषयलालस आत्ममोहं
युष्मत्कथामृतनिषेवक उद्व्युदस्येत्॥

The Vidyadharas said: Even after obtaining a human body, which is helpful in attaining to the spiritual *summum bonum*, man gets stranded (by the power of Thy Yoga-maya) in the body-consciousness, in the feeling that he is the body and nothing but the body. Even when insulted by his faithless sons and relatives, he continues to stick to his identification with the body, fascinated as he is with the attractions of sense-objects. Only those who are devoted to the hearing of accounts of Thy spiritual excellences and sportive divine manifestations can overcome this infatuation.

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 4.7.38-40,44

Fixing the Mind on God-IV

Love of God and Faith in Divinity

To avoid going westward, one must go eastward; then the west is automatically left behind. Dispassion for the world works conjointly with love for God and faith in Divinity. In the rejection of the sense-objects, there is inherent some belief in an existence beyond the reach of the senses; in the fight against the evil, there is an irrepressible voice urging us to go onward, forward, Godward. That voice cannot be stilled. It grows as we begin to cultivate it tenderly. Whether it be cultivating dispassion for the world or, positively put, love for God and faith in the divinity within, we need an abundance of Divine Grace without which it is difficult, if at all possible, to cross the realm of the Divine Power, *Mahāmāyā*. Even staunch Advaitins, recommend *bhakti* (devotion to God, defined by Nārada as 'of the nature of extreme love to some Being' and by Śaṇḍilya as 'extreme attachment to Īśvara'; defined from the Advaitic standpoint as 'seeking one's real nature' or 'inquiry into the truth of one's own Self' — *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, śloka 31-2;) as being conducive to liberation.

Swami Premananda recounts for us how this Divine Grace works in our lives, by snatching us away from worldly objects which have long infatuated our minds and by setting us along the spiritual path.

A man went to a garden with his several sons. The sons played about. Some plucked flowers, some plucked green coconuts, but one went to angle in the tank. When it was evening, the man called all his sons. All came except the one who was fishing. The father sent for him again and again but he would not come—he was deeply absorbed in catching fish.

When it was quite dark, the father himself went, broke the fishing rod to pieces, and dragged the boy to the carriage. Thus does the Lord come from time to time, shatter our playthings, and drag us to Him.¹

We are busy 'catching fish', running after the things of the world. We do not realize that nothing really is of any use in this world when it comes to realizing our true nature. Even if we have not set the realization of our true nature to be our goal, we only go madly hither and thither in search of things in the fond hope of getting the things of the world, which finally slip through our fingers and turn out to be only shadows. The sorrow that we feel when the world reveals to us its shadowy nature is God's gift to us, His calling us to remember Him and Him alone, and fight life's battle.

The very first chapter of the *Gita* is called '*viśāda-yoga*' and pictures the heroic Arjuna in a melancholy mood. It is this mood and the sense of utter helplessness in which Arjuna finds himself that make Arjuna take refuge in Sri Krishna with the words (*Gita*, 2. 7), 'with my nature overpowered by weak commiseration, with a mind bewildered about duty, I supplicate You. Tell me for certain that which is better. I am Your disciple. Instruct me who have taken refuge in You!' It is only when one confesses to the Lord his helplessness that He comes forward to explain the mystery of His creation, to guide the intellect along the direction.

1. Swami Premananda in *Spiritual Talks by the First Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1991), p. 71. [Hereafter *Talks*].

which brings good. Thus, sorrow is one of God's gifts to humanity. But sorrow should not lead us into a state of malencholy; we should come out of it victorious. This one has to do by one's own efforts by listening to the prompting of the inner voice—the unmistakable voice of the divine within.

This is the stand in the *Gita* also: one has to raise oneself by one's own efforts. True it is that great souls can give one a lift but if one is pushed up untimely and too high, one may not be able to stand it. Often one plunges to greater depths returning from such high states to which one was pushed. Again, there is pleasure in the struggle and the end result tastes sweeter when it is reached after a struggle. Half the charm is lost if a man acquires spiritual wealth by a deed of endowment as it were. Even great ones who were so blessed to reach spiritual heights worked out the details in later life to make spiritual knowledge their own possession. Those who gain spiritual experiences by not following any short-cut can also guide others, for truly they can say, 'I know every inch of the way'. Hence, it is laudable if one takes to the rational course and vows to struggle to reach the goal, and does not go about merely seeking the blessings of holy men or having dips in holy rivers expecting that a miracle would take place thereby.

Spiritual path has to be traversed by oneself and yet one may take the help of several aids. The second gift of God to the aspiring soul is holy company. Holy men and women, devotees of God, are persons who have led spiritual lives themselves and understood, as scientists do in relation to the external world, the laws that govern the spiritual world. Many times holy personages do not come forward to share this secret knowledge unless it is sought. By living in holy company, by serving holy persons, by observing the behaviour of such persons in different situations, by attending regularly religious celebrations, by reading scriptures and understanding their inner import from

them who have been able to grasp it, by studying the lives of saints which shows how through God's grace they themselves trod the spiritual path, we get encouragement, insight and the determination to walk on the narrow road that leads to spiritual wisdom. We get also the conviction that even the most confirmed criminal can aspire to become a saint when he reaches a turning point in one's life. Such a turning point—one's taking the bold step to clear the deck for battle—comes in the life of most aspirants.

The third gift of God to the spiritual aspirant is He Himself. It is God who reaches the aspirant through the physical form of one's spiritual teacher. The grace of God flows to the spiritual aspirant through his Guru. There may be differences between Gurus as regards their power to save a soul as Sri Ramakrishna remarks by giving an example:

One day as I was passing the Panchavati on my way to the pine-grove, I heard a bullfrog croaking. I thought it must have been seized by a snake. After some time, as I was coming back, I could still hear its terrified croaking. I looked to see what was the matter, and found that a water-snake had seized it. The snake could neither swallow it nor give it up. So there was no end to the frog's suffering. I thought had it been seized by a cobra it would have been silenced after three croaks at the most. As it was only a water-snake, both of them had to go through this agony. A man's ego is destroyed after three croaks, as it were, if he gets into the clutches of a real teacher. But if the teacher is an 'unripe' one, then both the teacher and the disciple undergo endless suffering. The disciple cannot get rid either of his ego or of the shackles of the world. If a disciple falls into the clutches of an incompetent teacher, he doesn't attain liberation.²

Then again, a spiritual teacher must have received the command of God. 'After receiving the command from God, one can be a teacher and give lectures anywhere. He who receives authority from God also receives power from Him. Only then can he perform the difficult task of a teacher.'³ In illustration thereof Sri Ramakrishna continues:

An insignificant tenant was once engaged in a lawsuit with a big landlord. People realized that there was a powerful man behind the tenant. Perhaps another big landlord was directing the case from behind. Man is an insignificant creature. He cannot fulfil the difficult task of a teacher without receiving power direct from God.⁴

The above two illustrations are significant. The spiritual aspirant must always look upon his Guru with the right attitude, that he is not a human person but a person who has received the power of God, that it is God's power that is working through the human frame of one's Guru, that it is God Himself who, out of His infinite mercy, is coming to us in the shape of our Guru. Swami Turiyananda lays stress on this great truth: that for emancipation from the bondage of the world, one must look upon the Guru as God Himself:

You can never be emancipated by adoring a man as man—you must look upon him as God. However great he may be in spiritual wisdom and dispassionateness, however highly endowed he may be with spiritual prowess, the worship of him will not effect your liberation, if you do not perceive him as God Himself. Without such a consciousness, his worship may serve to communicate to

you his spiritual qualities and powers, but nothing more.⁵

In the same vein, the *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad* (VI.23) says:

*Yasya deve parābhaktir-
yathā deve tathā gurau;
Tasyaite kathitā hyarthaḥ
prakāśante mahātmanah.*

Whoso hath highest love for God, and for the Guru as for God, to that high-souled one (Mahātman) the truths here taught shine in full.

The ideal Guru-disciple relationship is stated in the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, śloka 33–6. The Guru is described as one

who is versed in the Vedas, sinless, unsmitten by desire and a knower of Brahman *par excellence*, who has withdrawn himself into Brahman; who is calm, like fire that has consumed its fuel, who is a boundless reservoir of mercy that knows no reason, and a friend of all good people who prostrate themselves before him.

Worshipping that Guru with devotion, and approaching him, when he is pleased with prostration, humility and service, he (the disciple) should ask him what he has got to know:

O Master, O friend of those that bow to thee, thou ocean of mercy, I bow to thee; save me, fallen as I am into this sea of birth and death, with a straightforward glance of thine eye, which sheds nectar-like grace supreme.

Save me from death, afflicted as I am by the unquenchable fire of this world-forest, and shaken violently by the winds of an untoward lot, terrified and so seeking refuge in thee, for I do not know of any other person with whom to seek shelter.

2. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1994), p. 168. [Hereafter *Gospel*].

3. *Gospel*, p. 168.

4. *Gospel*, p. 168.

5. Swami Turiyananda in *Talks*, pp. 96–7.

The fourth gift of God to the aspiring soul, is the Name of God that the spiritual teacher imparts into the heart of the aspirant. The act itself is as it were handing over to the disciple one link of the chain that connects him to the treasure box lying submerged in the deep ocean. As the aspirant pulls at the chain drawing link by link, the treasure-chest comes nearer and nearer to him; but if he lets go his hold on the chain, the links slip back taking the treasure-chest again into the ocean, requiring the aspirant to put forth renewed efforts—a wasteful process. So, one must repeat the *mantra* given by one's Guru with devotion, faith and sincerity as directed by him, looking upon the Guru as God Himself.

The Chosen Deity (*Devatā*), the Guru and the *mantra* are pictured as members of a family. In the *Muṇḍamālā Tantra* it is said:

Mantra is born of the Guru, and *Devatā* (Chosen Deity) is born of the *mantra*, so that, O Beauteous One, Guru stands in the place of grandfather to the *Iṣṭadevatā*. Just as service done to the father or grandfather pleases the son or the grandson, service done to Guru pleases *mantra*; service done to *mantra* pleases *Devatā*; and service done to both the Guru and *mantra* also pleases the *Devatā*.⁶

Further, disregarding the Guru or the *Mantra* or the *Devatā* does not please the other two. The three are pleased if one serves all the three looking upon the image of the Chosen Deity as not made of wood or stone, looking upon the Guru as not merely a human figure and looking upon the *mantra* as not a mere collection of letters. 'They go to hell who think that Gurudeva is but a man, *mantra* is but letter, and the image of *Devatā* is but a stone.'⁷

The *mantra*, the Name of God is God Himself. The Name and the Named are identical, as we see in the familiar example that a person responds when he (or she) is called by his (or her) name. So, by calling on/praying to the Name of God, we are calling on/praying to God Himself.

The Guru imparts to the aspirant the *mantra-shakti* when he initiates him, and in turn has to take on the sins of the disciple. Therefore, a person should lead a regulated life before he places himself under the guidance of a Guru. To the *mantra-shakti* imparted by the Guru, the disciple must add sincere practice (*sadhana-shakti* of the aspirant) for spiritual fruition. Thus, it cannot be called surrender to the Guru if one after initiation does not follow the directions of the Guru and sits tight expecting the Guru to take care of his life here and hereafter.

As is often said, if one repeats the *mantra* diligently one travels quicker to the goal like going in a jet aircraft and if one does not, it will be like going on foot: 'Self-exertion is needed to snap the bondage. It is self-exertion that brings about quick results; otherwise there is no knowing when success will come.'⁸

Initiation into spiritual life by a Guru is necessary, for, by it two important requisites are met. The Holy Mother says: 'Initiation is necessary. It purifies the body. By repeating the mystic syllable of the Lord, man becomes purified.'⁹

Again, Swami Brahmananda says: 'Initiation into a *mantra* helps concentration of mind. Otherwise your mind will change and fluctuate: today you will like the form of Kali, tomorrow that of Hari, and next day perhaps the formless aspect of God. And thus your mind will not be concentrated

(Continued on page 335)

6. Arthur Avalon, *Principles of Tantra* (Madras: Ganesh & Co. (Madras) Ltd., 1952), p. 786. [Hereafter *Principles of Tantra*].

7. Quoted in *Principles of Tantra*, pp. 737–8.

8. Swami Turiyananda in *Talks*, p. 249.

9. Holy Mother in *Talks*, p. 15.

Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

(Continued from the March issue)

अरा इव रथनाभौ संहता यत्र नाड्यः
स एषोऽन्तश्चरते बहुधा जायमानः।
ओमित्येवं ध्यायथ आत्मानं
स्वस्ति वः पाराय तमसः परस्तात्॥

*Arā iva ratha-nābhau saṁhatā yatra nāḍyaḥ
sa eṣo'ntaś-carate bahudhā jāyamānaḥ;
Om-ity-evam dhyāyatha ātmānam
svasti vaḥ pārāya¹ tamasaḥ
parastāt. (II.ii.6)*

Where the nerves are fixed like the spokes in the hub of a chariot wheel, there (in the heart) moves about this Self by becoming manifold. Meditate on the Self with the help of Om. May you be free from hindrances in crossing to the other shore which is beyond darkness.

The teacher now gives another simile to the student. As the hub of a wheel brings together or connects all spokes, so also all human interactions are connected and controlled through the channels of the nervous system. *Nāḍyāḥ* means the nerves which are the channels of communication. All experiences of the human being from the various parts of the body reach the central place, the heart, the centre of the nervous system, the core of the person. The communication may be from the heart to the outside or from the outside to the heart. All information are collected from the outside and stored in the core of his being. The supreme Being, the Atman, resides and moves about in the centre of the person, the heart. Thus, the source of Existence lies within you, in the heart,

from where all initiatives proceed and to which all experiences proceed. *Bahudhā jāyamānāḥ* means that the *jīvātmā* reacts in different ways. An individual has a spontaneous and automatic interaction with the world of nature through his nervous system—sometimes he is angry, sometimes happy, sometimes miserable, etc. He is thus a slave to the external stimuli.

In the previous *mantra* the teacher had asked one to look at the external (objective) world as a manifestation of Brahman. Now he is taking up the human or subjective aspect of the world and tells us how, not having educated ourselves correctly, we become slaves to the stimuli from the external world and dance to their tune giving out many different reactions. Swamiji gives a simile for man's position: Man is absolutely restless like a mad monkey fed with alcohol, bitten by scorpions and possessed by a ghost, till he comes to know his true original nature. The remedy is to continuously remember oneself as Atman, to reach through the use of the *Oṁkāra* the glory, excellence and pristine purity of the Self. The teacher knows that it is not easy and so he blesses the student by saying, may your journey of going beyond the world of ignorance (darkness) be devoid of pitfalls, mistakes and failures, and may success attend your endeavour. The teacher tells the student to concentrate (*dhyāyatha*) on the *praṇava* (the *Oṁkāra*) as the symbol of his true original nature and to meditate on the great Cause of the universe—gross, subtle and causal. He is to pass through this stage of meditation repeatedly during his daily routine. As great fish keep

1. Another reading, *parāya*.

going from one shore to the other despite the strong current, even so one has to travel between this bank, the apparent world, and that bank, the Reality, as the Upaniṣads say. This is a totally subjective effort and experience. The outer world will know nothing of what is happening within—one's relentless, untiring, uninterrupted effort to remind oneself of the Atman.

यः सर्वज्ञः सर्वविद्यस्यैष महिमा भुवि।
दिव्ये ब्रह्मपुरे ह्येष व्योम्यात्मा प्रतिष्ठितः॥
मनोमयः प्राणशरीरनेता
प्रतिष्ठितोऽन्त्रे हृदयं सन्निधाय।
तद्विज्ञानेन परिपश्यन्ति धीरा
आनन्दरूपममृतं यद्विभाति॥

*Yah sarvajñah sarva-vid-
yasyaiṣa mahimā bhuvī;
divye brahma-pure hy-eṣa
vyomny-ātmā pratiṣṭhitaḥ.*

*Mano-mayaḥ prāṇa-śarīra-netā
pratiṣṭhito'ntre hrdayam sannidhāya;
Tad-vijñānena paripaśyanti dhīrā
ānanda-rūpam-amṛtaṁ yad-
vibhāti. (II.ii.7)*

That Self who is all-knowing in general and all-knowing in detail, and whose is such glory on the earth, that Atman which is of this kind is established in the space of the luminous city of Brahman.

It consists of the mind. It is the leader (carrier) of the vital forces and of the body. It is seated on food, controlling the heart. The discriminating (wise) people realize through the knowledge of this Self that which shines surpassingly as blissful and immortal.

The real Self is *sarvajñah*, knowing the whole world in general (in principle), and *sarvavit*, knowing everything in detail. That Self of such excellence and glory is famous, known to everybody in this world. It is effulgent, without any touch of darkness or ignorance. Once the reality is known, every-

thing is known; nothing is left unknown. The question (I.i.3) asked by Śaunaka was: 'Through understanding what does all this (world) become known?' The answer is given in this *mantra*: *sarvajñah*, *sarvavit*. Your level of understanding expands to infinite dimensions when your true Being is known because the Self is *sarvajñah* and *sarvavit*.

But where does that Reality reside? Its location must also be known. The teacher corrects wrong ideas that the student may have. He pervades everything; but do not look for the divine outside. The best place is to know Him within yourself. The ordinary conception is of God outside—in the temple, in the shrine, in places of pilgrimage. But the Upaniṣad will not tell you partial truths. It tells the whole truth. If it is said that God resides 'there', my five faculties will try to perceive that name-form through sight, touch, taste, smell, etc., while, in fact, the Essence of the universe is beyond the reach of the five senses. The abode of the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent Being is *Brahmapura*, the luminous place or space in the heart, deep within, where all the nerves come and join the core. Atman is established so deep within that the mind and the words fail to reach It. So, going beyond darkness means looking into the very cavity of the heart for one's true original nature. To reach the goal, one must make the journey within oneself first.

Atman totally permeates our minds and all our experiences. It is the leader (carrier) of the life-breaths functioning within our body and has the capacity to carry them from where they are to a higher level. When we die, we carry with us the totality of our experiences in this life and the experiences of our previous lives. We migrate from our present body into another body life after life till the goal is reached. The *Puruṣa* who resides within the city of nine gates is *Pūrṇa* (completely satiated). He has to be experi-

enced by the purified mind, through this body during our earthly existence. If we do not succeed in this life, then that carrier (leader) will lead us to another and to yet another life-form, till we reach the destined goal. Giving up the *sthūla śarīra* (gross body) at death, we go to the *sūkṣma śarīra* (subtle body), and again take birth in a *sthūla śarīra*. *Janmāntara-vāda* (doctrine of rebirth) is implied here. This human life is precious and has to be utilized for the knowledge of the Atman alone, failing which we have to take rebirth.

To find the Atman we have to look directly within us as It is established in the *sthūla śarīra* (gross body) formed from food. It is very securely placed in the heart. By 'heart' is not meant the anatomical heart but, as Śaṅkara says, in the heart is felt the psychic experience of the consciousness (*cetana*) of my being: 'I exist'. He gives the example of '*gehe iva dehe āsan*, though in the body, as if in the room'. When asked, 'where are you now?', you respond, 'I am sitting in the room'. So you are in the body yet you say you are in the room. That is to say, the body is merely the place where Atman resides. Were the body to disappear (say the body-consciousness disappears), the core of that body, the Atman, will still be there.

The *dhīra puruṣas* (wise men) are those who are stable and do not run after things external. One day they come to the stage when they declare with finality that they are

tired of this unending farce of the world; this dream does not please them any more. This stage is referred to by the statement of the *Kāthopaniṣad* that while God has created the sense organs to go and look outside and not to perceive the Atman, some *dhīra puruṣas*, desirous of tasting immortality with eyes closed to the outside world, start the journey within to experience their own original nature. *Vijñāna* (intuitive experience) is not mere *jñāna*—intellectual knowledge, rational understanding of something; it is to digest, assimilate and then to nourish ourselves, to become strong, i.e., it is practicalisation of intellectual knowledge of the oneness of the universe by changing our very perspective on life. By knowing the Atman through intuitive experience, *tad vijñānena*, that *dhīra*, mature person, has a transformation of his vision, *paripaśyanti*. He experiences Atman as his very Self and no more as a quality or faculty or an object.

The transformation in him is due to identification with *ānanda-rūpa* and *amṛta-rūpa* Atman within and then seeing it gleam forth, *yad-vibhāti*, in the universe. The *sac-cidānanda rūpa* of Atman is at present covered by ignorance (darkness of endless desires). When a person becomes stable and mature by clearing himself of this dirt and impurity, then the true glory and excellence of the Atman, its blissful and immortal nature, shine forth.

(to be continued)

Instead of sitting idly, waiting for an illumined soul to become your guru, make an effort to do these three things which are necessary for spiritual life: contemplation of God, study of the scriptures, and association with the holy. First prepare the ground by digging, removing the weeds, and watering the soil with earnest care.... As soon as the soil is ready, the sower of the seeds inevitably comes.... Whenever an aspirant intensely longs for God, he finds the way towards the fulfilment of his desire.

—Swami Saradananda, *Precepts for Perfection*, p. 66

Atharva-Veda—A Brief Study

SWAMI HARSHANANDA

Swami Harshanandaji Maharaj, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and the President of Ramakrishna Math at Bangalore as also the author of several books and monographs, presents in this article a brief insight into what Atharva-Veda contains. This may stimulate interested readers to go in for a deeper study of this branch of the Vedas.

The most ancient and basic scriptures of Hinduism are known as Vedas. Derived from the root 'vid' (=to know), they represent a vast body of religio-spiritual knowledge transmitted orally from generation to generation over the millennia. Hindu tradition ascribes to the sage Krishna-Dvaipayana, better known as Vyasa, the systematization and editing of the vast Vedic literature with a view to preserving it for posterity. He is said to have divided the Vedas into four parts and taught them to his four chief disciples: Paila, Vaishampayana, Jaimini and Sumanta. These four Vedas are well known as *Rig-veda*, *Yajur-veda*, *Sama-veda* and *Atharva-veda* (vide *Mahabharata*, *Adi-parva*, 60.5; *Bhagavata*, 12.6.50).

The *Atharva-veda*, the last in the series, has also been called by several other names: *Atharvana-veda*, *Atharvangirasa*, *Angirasa*, *Bhriguangirasa*, *Bhriguvistara*, *Brahma-veda*, *Bhaishajya-veda* and *Kshatra-veda*.

The word *Atharvan*, probably derived from 'athar', an obsolete word for fire, might mean 'the priest of fire'. So, *Atharvan* may be the name of an ancient sage who 'brought fire down from heaven' and started the sacrificial rites here on earth.

In Hindu mythology he is described as a son of Brahma, the Creator, who induced fire-rituals with *soma* and other materials. He is identified with Angiras also called Atharvangirasa. It is also possible that the rishis of the clans of Atharvan, Angiras, Bhrigu, Atharvangirasa and Brahman were the *drashtaras* of this Veda, i.e., the sages to

whom the various hymns of this Veda were revealed. Hence some of the other names of this Veda.

The title *Brahma-veda* could have been derived from the fact that it was revealed to the priest Brahma, the fourth of the four priests, the other three being Hota, Adhvaryu and Udgata, connected with the first three Vedas in that order. In a more general sense it can also mean the Veda that helps in the attainment of Brahman.

The two names *Bhaishajya-veda* and *Kshatra-veda* have obviously been derived from the subject-matter of the Veda which contains a bit of material on *bhaishajya* (medicines and treatment) and *kshatra* (the warrior class known as the *kshatriyas*).

The *Atharva-veda* has some special features because of which it stands a little apart from the other three Vedas, especially the *Rig-veda*. It deals with things here and now, than with the hereafter, and the sacrifices which are means to them. A major portion of this Veda is concerned with diseases and their cure, rites for prolonging life, rites for fulfilling one's desires, building construction, trade and commerce, statecraft, penances and propitiatory rites and black-magic. However, high philosophical ideas, very near to the thought-pattern of the Upanishads are also to be found. Even the literary style is more sophisticated. Some scholars believe that this work, for these reasons, was not admitted into the comity of Vedic literature for a long time. It was perhaps considered as a 'scripture for the

masses' and not fit enough for admission for the 'elite-group'. Its sheer popularity might have forced the leaders of the society into admitting it as the fourth Veda and into giving its priests also an honourable place in sacrifices.

For the very same reasons, it is opined that this Veda is chronologically posterior to the other three Vedas. Some modern scholars like C.V. Vaidya (vide *History of Vedic Literature*, p. 156) assign to it the period 3000 to 2500 BC. But, Vedic chronology is a very hazardous topic, it being very difficult to fix the periods precisely.

From ancient times, nine *shakhas* or branches of the *Atharva-veda* (*Samhita*) are known to have existed. However, only two of them are extant: *Pippalada* and *Shaunaka*. Of these, it is the latter that is available in a complete form.

This Veda is divided into four *prapathakas*, comprising of 20 *kandas*. Each *kanda* is again subdivided into *suktas* and these *suktas*, into *mantras*. The details are given in Table I. This gives us 6077 *mantras* in 736 *suktas* spread over 20 *kandas* in 4 *prapathakas*. However, due to the different methods adopted in grouping or classifying, the number of *suktas* given by various scholars have varied from 598 to 759. But there is no difference in the number of the *mantras*.

The last *kanda*, i.e., the 20th, has borrowed heavily (to the tune of 90%) from the *Rig-veda Samhita*. It is opined that the *kandas* 19 and 20, sometimes termed *Khilakanda*, are later additions to this Veda.

Coming to the subject-matter of the *Samhita* of this Veda, we find that there is no

Table I: Break-up of Atharva-Veda

<i>Prapathakas</i>	<i>Kandas</i>	<i>Suktas</i>	<i>Mantras</i>
I	1 to 7	433	2030
II	8 to 12	45	1573
III	13 to 18	43	1063
IV	19 & 20	215	1411

systematic division of the same in the first twelve *kandas*. The last two, again, deal with miscellaneous topics. A brief summary of the contents may now be attempted, under eight headings:

1. *Bhaishajya Suktas*: These *suktas* deal with diseases, their causes and cures, and show a remarkable insight into the subject of health sciences. That is why this Veda is considered to be the precursor to *Ayurveda* (The Science of Health and Longevity). Sometimes *Ayurveda* is listed as an *upaveda* (subsidiary) of the *Atharva-veda*. These *suktas* contain many prayers for health and longevity. The names of the various parts of the body given here bespeak of an intimate knowledge of human anatomy. Several diseases like fever, leucoderma, leprosy, jaundice, diabetes, dropsy, skin disorders, troubles of the ear, nose and throat, fracture of bones, diseases of the heart and tuberculosis, are mentioned and their cures indicated. These diseases are said to be caused by germs, violations of the laws of nature, anger of deities and malevolent spirits, and sins committed previously. Apart from medicines and physical remedies, chants and charms are also prescribed in plenty. A deep knowledge of the medicinal properties of various herbs can be inferred from many of the *mantras*.

2. *Ayushya Suktas*: These *suktas* contain supplications for longevity and are to be uttered on auspicious occasions like *chaula* (tonsure), *upanayana* (investiture with the sacred thread), *godana* (gifting of cows) and so on. The desire to live the full span of life, i.e., 100 years, is often expressed. One of the *suktas* (*kanda* 17) prescribes the wearing of the *rakshasutra* (thread of protection) on the body to attain longevity.

3. *Paushtika Suktas*: *Pushti* means worldly progress and welfare. These *suktas* generally contain prayers for invoking the blessings of deities like the Maruts, Parjanya and others so that there may be good rains and crops, and, works like house-construction.

tion or agriculture or trade may flourish well.

4. *Abhicharaka Suktas*: While the *Paushtika Suktas* are intended to bring prosperity, the *Abhicharaka Suktas* are aimed at destroying or harming enemies who obstruct our progress or try to destroy us. This is said to be achieved by pleasing or appeasing certain deities or spirits and getting one's wishes fulfilled through them. This technique is called *yatu* or *kriya*. The number of such *suktas* is rather large. Destruction of one's enemies including the lovers of one's spouse, annihilation of evil spirits, mesmerizing others through whom one can get one's desires fulfilled—these are some of the topics dealt with in these *suktas*. The word *Krishnendrajala* is sometimes used to indicate the type of black-magic rites depicted here. As opposed to this, the auspicious rites described in the *Paushtika Suktas* are called *Shuklendrajala*.

5. *Prayaschitta Suktas*: These are concerned mainly with expiatory rites to offset the evil effects that may accrue as a result of non-performance or wrong performance of religious rites. Omens foreboding evil and the rites necessary to combat them are also described.

6. *Strikarma Suktas*: These *suktas* deal mainly with marriage, love and allied topics. Rites that help in regaining the lost love of one's spouse are also described.

7. *Rajakarma Suktas*: This section gives an account of the political system that obtained during those days. The king used to be elected by the people. National and social problems used to be discussed by or decided in a *samiti*, a parliament of the people. The *rajapurohita* (chief priest of the state) had an enviable place in the affairs of the state. Prayers for victory in war and hymns expressing devotion to the motherland given here are highly poetic and moving.

8. *Brahmanya Suktas*: These *suktas* unfold the nature of Brahman, the Absolute. The philosophical ideas given here form a

link between those of the *Rig-veda* and of the Upanishads.

God, the Absolute, is designated here by various names such as Kala, Skambha, Uchchishta and Vratya which are rather peculiar to this Veda. From Him the whole universe emerges and in Him it is established. He is the Lord of the whole creation. The universe has evolved out of Him, because He willed it thus (vide 19.53.8). The sun is a symbol of His power and is called Rohita, the Red One. He is identified with God Himself. This Absolute is also identified with the Atman.

The word *vratyā* found in this section represents Brahman, the Absolute. It has nothing to do with the people who had been without Vedic sacraments, the sense in which the word has been used in the *dharmaśāstras*.

The *Atharva-veda Samhita* gives us an interesting picture of the society of its times. The land in which the people lived extended from Gandhara (Afghanistan) to Magadha and Anga (Bihar and Bengal). The *varna* system had been well established. The first three *varnas* were called *Aryas* and the fourth as *Shudras*. But people lived in harmony. Kings were powerful. Trade and commerce were prosperous though agriculture was their mainstay. There are hints to show that the *brahmanas* were powerful and had sometimes to face the wrath of the *kshatriya* kings. The cow was highly venerated and *godana* (gifting of cows) was considered highly meritorious. There are references to the *Rajasuya* sacrifice and wars among kings. The institute of marriage was very similar to that of the *Rig-vedic* times; so also the obsequial rites.

No *Aranyaka* of the *Atharva-veda* has come to light so far. Only one *Brahmana* has been discovered, the *Gopatha Brahmana*.

The three well-known Upanishads—the *Prasna*, the *Mundaka* and the *Mandukya*—belong to this Veda. □

Sri Ramakrishna's Religion

SUSAN WALTERS

This article is the text of a paper given on 23 August 1997 at a symposium sponsored by the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture to celebrate the founding of the Ramakrishna Mission. The topic of the symposium was Sri Ramakrishna's Religion. The paper has been somewhat revised for publication by the author.

Introduction

To define Sri Ramakrishna's religion is not an easy task. 'To define is to limit.' And his religion, like he himself, is limitless. Nevertheless, we can at least give a name to his great legacy, and then see what kind of religion that name implies.

Sri Ramakrishna was born into a devout orthodox Hindu family and had great reverence for the Hindu religion, so he could be called a Hindu, and his religion, Hinduism. Still, because of his emphasis on the necessity of having the direct experience of God, he could also be called a Mystic, and his religion 'Mysticism', since 'Mysticism stands at the very root of religious experience. The mystic, not content with the bare externals of religion, seeks a direct experience of God or Ultimate Reality,' in the words of the Kashmiri writer, A.N. Dhar.¹

The problem with these terms, 'Hinduism' and 'Mysticism', is that both have generally been misunderstood and misinterpreted. Mysticism is often regarded as something occult and mysterious because it deals with a Reality beyond the realm of the senses, and Hinduism is often considered to be one religion among many, when in reality it forms the basis of all religions. True Hinduism is the Sanatana Dharma, the Eternal Religion otherwise known as Vedanta, because it is founded on the eternal universal principles of the Vedas. It has given to man-

kind a religion and philosophy that are valid for all times, all places, all peoples. For this reason, 'Sanatana Dharma' is the name I would give the religion of Sri Ramakrishna, whose teachings are also for all time and all people. He and his followers could then be called 'Vedantists'.

Sanatana Dharma

He himself said about the Sanatana Dharma:

The Eternal Religion, the religion of the rishis, has been in existence from time out of mind and will exist eternally. There exist in this Sanatana Dharma all forms of worship of God with form and worship of the Impersonal Deity as well. It contains all paths—the path of knowledge, the path of devotion, and so on. Other forms of religion...will remain for a few days and then disappear.²

On another occasion, Sri Ramakrishna gave a succinct definition of the Sanatana Dharma, which he usually referred to as 'Vedanta'. He said, 'But the essence of Vedanta is "Brahman alone is real, and the world illusory; I have no separate existence; I am that Brahman alone."' ³

In other words, the supreme truth of Vedanta is the divinity of man, and that in essence he is not different from Brahman,

1. A.N. Dhar, *Mysticism in Literature* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1985), p. 1.

2. Translated by Swami Nikhilananda, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Mylapore, Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1986), p. 404. [Hereafter, *Gospel*.]

3. *Gospel*, p. 858.

the divine Centre, and Soul of the universe.

The implication of this philosophy is so vast that it is impossible to describe the many aspects of Sri Ramakrishna's religion that have been formed from it. Not that he ever tried to 'form a religion', but the truths that fell so artlessly from his lips have fortunately been captured and preserved by some of his disciples. They form a religion for many. When we read some of those inspired words of Sri Ramakrishna, we are able to get an idea of what may be called 'his religion'.

Emphasis on Love and Truth

One thing we may notice is his emphasis on two concepts: Love and Truth. In his oft-repeated prayer to the Divine Mother and his comments on it, he mentions both Love and Truth. He said:

I prayed to Her... 'Mother, here is Thy knowledge and here is Thy ignorance. Take them both and give me only pure love. Here is Thy holiness and here is Thy unholiness. Take them both, Mother, and give me pure love. Here is Thy good and here is Thy evil. Take them both...and give me pure love....Here is Thy righteousness and here is Thy unrighteousness. Take them both...and give me pure love.'

But I could not say, 'Mother, here is Thy truth and here is Thy falsehood. Take them both.' I gave up everything at Her feet but could not bring myself to give up truth.⁴

Sri Ramakrishna said many more things about Love (generally referred to as bhakti) and Truth, only a few of which will be mentioned here. On Love (bhakti), he said:

One can see God through bhakti alone. When one has such love and attachment for God, one doesn't feel the attraction of maya to wife, children, etc....One retains only compassion

for them.⁵

Bhakti is the one essential thing. Who can ever know God through reasoning?⁶

The bhakta sees that He who is God has also become maya....He Himself has become the universe and all its living beings. The bhakta sees God, maya, the universe, and the living beings as one.⁷

Mad! That's the word. One must become mad with love in order to realize God. But that love is not possible if the mind dwells on 'woman and gold'. What happiness is there in that? The realization of God gives ten million times more happiness.⁸

About Truth Sri Ramakrishna said:

If a man holds to truth, he will certainly realize God.⁹

If a man leads a householder's life, he must have unflagging devotion to truth. God can be reached by truth alone.¹⁰

It is said that truthfulness alone constitutes the spiritual discipline of the Kaliyuga. If a man clings tenaciously to truth, he ultimately realizes God.¹¹

Sri Ramakrishna spoke on many other aspects of religion also, especially on renunciation and discrimination. His legacy of inspired words is inexhaustible.

Who is Sri Ramakrishna?

In trying to discover exactly what Sri Ramakrishna's religion was, and is, we have examined some of his central teachings. But can we really grasp the significance of his religion without understanding who *he* is?

Was he only a human being—a great teacher, but only a man? Or was he God Himself? Or was he both human and divine—an Avatar, a Divine Incarnation?

5. *Gospel*, p. 173.

6. *Gospel*, p. 157.

7. *Gospel*, p. 243.

8. *Gospel*, p. 346.

9. *Gospel*, p. 296.

10. *Gospel*, p. 418.

11. *Gospel*, p. 312.

4. *Gospel*, p. 312.

On several occasions Sri Ramakrishna made it clear that he was a Divine Incarnation, perhaps most explicitly when shortly before he passed away, he declared, 'He who was Rama and Krishna is now Ramakrishna in this body.'¹² Like them, he had taken on a human body and come to earth to show man the way out of his suffering. Like them he had brought great spiritual power which takes many centuries to completely manifest itself. Sri Ramakrishna clearly explained the human behaviour of a Divine Incarnation in these words:

God incarnating himself as man behaves exactly like a man....In the theatre, when an actor comes on stage in the role of a holy man, he behaves like one, and not like the actor who is taking the part of a king. He plays his own role.¹³

Sri Ramakrishna played the role of a simple, illiterate temple priest. It is his human traits that draw so many people to him, even today, and make them want to worship him. How attractive is the simple, childlike character of Sri Ramakrishna! How playful and full of fun he was! How human were his attachments to his friends and disciples! He wept and prayed for the welfare of Keshab Sen when he was ill, and he missed Narendra so much that he once paced the floor all night long, crying.

Yet, divinity was his essential nature. He was God, beyond all good and evil, happiness and misery. The deepest truths sprang unceasingly from his lips. Thus, his religion formed from those truths, like the Vedas is founded on God's own words. They pierce our hearts with the force of their eternal, unchanging Truth. He had only temporarily, incomprehensibly put on a human garment so that he appeared to be like one of us. And this is the great mystery: the more he resembled us, the more divine he

seemed to be.

In reality, though we are attracted to the human element in Sri Ramakrishna, it is not just a human being we bow down to when we offer flowers or fruit to him in a temple or in our own shrine. We are worshipping God, who as Sri Ramakrishna is still living in the subtle plane. He did not merge in the Absolute after passing away, but, like other Divine Incarnations, kept his own identity out of love for struggling, suffering human beings. He hears the sincere prayers of those who pray to him, and works in ways we cannot understand for the good of people everywhere. The more we worship him, the more we come to love him. And as our love increases, our hearts expand and we learn to see him in all creatures and love them.

Who Belongs to Sri Ramakrishna's Religion?

The question sometimes arises: Who can be said to belong to Ramakrishna's Religion? Perhaps this question cannot be answered — or, better still — perhaps it is not necessary to ask or answer this question. Only the person who is utterly devoted to Sri Ramakrishna knows deep within his heart that he belongs to him, and he may guard his feelings as too sacred to speak of.

This is in fact a question most often asked by those brought up in a semitic religion — particularly Christianity or Islam, where sharp distinctions (sometimes resulting in violent conflicts) are made between the various religions, and sometimes between sects of the same religion.

The traditional outlook of people brought up in an oriental culture (including people of China, Japan, Korea, India, et al.) is different. People there worship whatever God or Goddess they feel most drawn to, and no one would think of criticizing their choice. Moreover, most Asians worship different deities or at different shrines at different times. Indians, for example, worship Durga, Kali, Krishna, Shiva and other deities

12. *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1990), p. 456.

13. *Gospel*, p. 361.

on their festival days. They also worship Christ and Buddha on their holy days, and they honour Moslem holy places and holy persons. (This is the ideal, but like all ideals is occasionally not practised.)

Fortunately, Sri Ramakrishna's ideal of the acceptance of all religions, besides reviving in India the ancient teaching from the Vedas, 'Truth is one, wise men speak of it in various ways,' is beginning to take hold in semitic-based religions. For example, Sri Ramakrishna and his Vedantic philosophy are being accepted by more and more Christians and Moslems. Some Moslems in Bangladesh are very supportive and appreciative of the Ramakrishna Mission in Dhaka. And some Christians are now devoted to Sri Ramakrishna.

One instance of this is shown in a letter to a leading newspaper in regard to its sordid review of a book about Sri Ramakrishna maligning his character. A Christian wrote a

letter of protest, which said in part:

I am a Christian by faith, but I adore Ramakrishna. I also feel that a proper understanding of this great saint of India is necessary in order to appreciate the life and teachings of Christ. Renunciation and purity were the hallmarks of Ramakrishna's character. (The letter was signed, 'Joshua Smith'.)

Another example is an Indian Syriac Christian, a distinguished Philosophy Professor of a Canadian University, who calls himself 'an Advaitic Christian,' and has evidently learned much from Advaita Vedanta.

I think the fact that these and other non-Hindus are accepting Sri Ramakrishna or his philosophy is an encouraging sign that 'Ramakrishna's Religion' is bringing meaning and peace to many who are suffering under the heavy burden of a materialistic philosophy and dogmatic religion. □

Fixing the Mind on God - IV

(Continued from page 325)

upon any one.¹⁰

The Guru graciously purifies the body, steadies the disciple's mind, imparts the *mantra-shakti* to the disciple, watches over the disciple, takes the complete responsibility for the future of the disciple — here and

hereafter —, and, establishing an eternal relationship with the disciple, sees to his emancipation. Can one ever repay one's debt to the Guru? Can one ever doubt that it is God's unconditional grace that flows to the disciple through the human frame of the Guru? In a very small way one can please such a Guru by implicitly following his directions.

10. Swami Brahmananda in *Talks*, p. 26.

(to be continued)

Salutations to Him, the Omnipresent, from Whom the universe is inseparable. He, the First Cause of the universe, is the one fit Object of meditation. May He, the Changeless One, be propitious.

—*Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, I.19, quoted in *Universal Prayers*, pp. 62–3

Haran Chandra Das

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

Revered Swami Prabhanandaji, a senior monk and trustee of the Ramakrishna Math, in this article describes the transformation brought about in the life of Haran Chandra Baag (title later changed from Baag to Das) by coming into contact with Sri Ramakrishna. Though a timid and humble devotee of God with not much recognition even in the circle of devotees, Haran was blessed in a unique way by his Master on 1 January 1886. This brought about a transformation in his life.

If human life can be described as a drama with human beings playing their roles as what they are not, then the life of a God-incarnate consisting of a sequence of events in which the Divine reveals Himself sometimes as God Himself and at other times as a mere devotee of God or His servant, can rightly be called a Divine Drama. It is somewhat like the game of hide-and-seek and this game, in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, was amazingly transparent. During the last days of his earthly life, this game of hide-and-seek, dominated by divine mood, became all the more exalting. He was then staying in the garden-house at Cossipore in the northern suburb of Calcutta. His life then testified to his contemporaneous utterances: 'I see that all things — everything that exists — have come from this [meaning Himself].'¹ 'I do not find my "I"; I see that it is God alone who resides in this sheath [referring to his own physical frame].'² 'It is God alone who dwells in this (body). That is why so many people are feeling more and more attracted to it. A mere touch is enough to awaken their spirituality. This attraction, this pull, is the

attraction of God, and of none else.'³ More often than not, extraordinary events of Divine Grace took place, all aimed at doing good to others. Though these could hardly be explained rationally, yet none of these happenings or their impact on the persons concerned could be ignored. He had an equal loving concern for all human beings, yet his 'doing spiritual good' seemed always to be commensurate to the needs and capacity of the recipient.

Some very extraordinary and exciting events occurred on 1 January 1886, a public holiday. Most biographers of Sri Ramakrishna mention that the Master bestowed unusual grace on the devotees on that day at about 3 p.m. But a careful study shows that the Master liberally bestowed his grace in an exalted divine mood throughout the day⁴, although the climax of the day's drama was reached at about 3 p.m. To many he appeared as a wish fulfilling tree, to others it was but 'the bestowal of freedom from fear on all devotees by revealing himself'.⁵

At about 3 p.m., the Master came down

1. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, translated by Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1952), p. 945. [Hereafter *Gospel*].

2. *Gospel*, p. 846.

3. *Gospel*, p. 798.

4. Swami Prabhananda, 'Anandarup Sri Ramakrishna', *Udbodhan*, pp. 146-60.

5. *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1970), p. 891. [Hereafter *Great Master*].

from his room on the first floor and went into the garden. He, who had been seriously ill, revealed his real divine nature in a remarkably clear manner to about three dozen householder devotees who had assembled at the garden-house at Cossipore. Everyone of them had inexplicable experiences which varied from one devotee to another. None of the Master's disciples who later took to the monastic way of life joined in the melee. No lady devotee was present. None of those who participated in the joyous events was a newcomer or an unwanted person. Strangely enough, almost everyone of those present received a special benediction of his choice which deeply affected the later course of his life.

As he strolled along the garden path among the devotees who had gathered in the garden, he met Girishchandra Ghosh, the noted actor-dramatist of Bengal who had declared publicly that Sri Ramakrishna was a divine incarnation. The Master asked him to substantiate this claim of his. To this an overwhelmed Girishchandra frankly confessed, 'Who am I to speak of Him? Even the great sages like Vyasa and Valmiki could find no words to estimate His greatness.' This triggered off a sudden flush of divine compassion in the Master. This resulted in a stream of divine grace. Deeply moved, Sri Ramakrishna said in an ecstatic mood, 'What more shall I say? May you all be illumined!' As he uttered these words, a thrill passed through his body. Transported into a state of extraordinary divine manifestation, he blessed everybody whoever approached him. The immediate effect on persons, of the Master's few words or touch, varied widely — some sat in meditation, some sang and danced in joy, and some shouted to others calling them to join. However, there was something common. Everybody had the feeling of being filled with divine bliss. Besides, the experience brought enduring change in the life of everyone of

them, ensuring their spiritual growth.

Haran Chandra, less known among the devotees even and a timid and humble devotee of God who considered himself to be the servant of the Master from the day he met him, interestingly, was the recipient of the most striking form of benediction on this day. Sri Ramakrishna's biographer, Swami Saradananda, remarks:

Of all the people that felt blessed by having his grace on that day, Haranchandra Das is worthy of being particularly mentioned. For, as soon as he bowed down to him, the Master in ecstasy placed his lotus foot on Haran's head. It is only on a few occasions that we saw him bestow his grace in this way.⁶

The Master's touch made him feel palpably the immediate presence of Divinity. The

6. *Great Master*, p. 891.

This Episode reminds many of Gaya, the demon devoted to Lord Vishnu, in whose name Gaya was consecrated. By practising severe austerities he developed high spiritual power, and people seeing him became purified and found shelter in Vaikuntha. To contain him the gods sat on his body; it did not work. At last Lord Vishnu placed His lotus feet on his chest. (*Pauranika Abhidhan* (Bengali), 6th Edition, pp. 144-5.) The learned author in his letter dated 21 December 1997 adds: 'It is not correct to say that Gayasura was not blessed by Lord Vishnu. For, Gayasura himself considered that he was very much blessed by the Lord.'

Periya Puranam is replete with narratives of God's benediction on the devotee. Lord Shiva, abiding in Veeratham, blessed the devotee Vanthondar by placing His foot on his head (pp. 46-7); at Nallor, Lord Shiva adorned the head of Appar with His lotus feet (p. 295). See Sekkizhar, *Periya Puranam*, ed. Dr. N. Mahalingam, 1985.

grace the Master showered on him that day was something he had not even dreamt of; it galvanized his spiritual striving and gave him a direction.

The devotees present on the scene were amazed as were those who had occasion to witness similar incidents before. Earlier, Sri Ramakrishna, in an ecstatic mood had accepted the worship made by his sister [Hriday's mother] and placed his foot on her head.⁷ In a state of samadhi, he had placed his foot on Tarak's [of Belgharia] chest.⁸ Similarly, in a divine mood he had blessed two lady devotees by touching their hearts with his feet. They shed tears of joy.⁹

Albeit, such actions of Sri Ramakrishna were an enigma to persons like Dr. Mahendralal Sircar. Why should a 'child of nature' that Sri Ramakrishna was, behave so shamefully? It might cause him harm. Such were Sircar's doubt and concern. There ensued several interesting dialogues between the two. On 26 October 1885, for example, Sri Ramakrishna told Dr. Sircar: 'Once in that strange mood of mine, I placed my foot on Vijay's chest. You know how greatly I respect him — and I placed my foot on his body! What do you say to that?'

Doctor: But you should be careful.

Master (with folded hands): What can I do? I become completely unconscious in that mood. Then I do not know at all what I am doing.

Doctor: You should be careful. No use in folding your hands now and expressing regret!

Master: Can I do anything myself in that mood? What do you think of that state? If you think it is a hoax, then I should say that your study of science and all that is

bosh!

Doctor: Now listen, sir! Would I come to see you so often if I thought it all a hoax?...¹⁰

Quite unaware of what he was doing, he, in a state of divine madness, used to transmit in this way spirituality to others and take their sins upon himself.¹¹ It is the *Bhāgavatī Tanu*¹² (a term used in the Tantras) of Sri Ramakrishna, by which he used to commu-

10. *Gospel*, p. 891.

11. *Gospel*, p. 905.

12. In his letter dated 21 December 1997, the learned author writes as follows:

'*Bhāgavatī Tanu*' mentioned in the *Gospel* (translated on p. 217 as 'Love Body' and on p. 902 as 'Divine Body') is not in accordance with the Vedānta. According to Vedānta all such divine bliss [body?] etc. are within the confines of the *Pañcakośa*. The reference to *Bhāgavatī Tanu* in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.6.29) is similar to the idea mentioned in the *Gospel*.

Now, what happened on 1 January 1886? Let me quote Swami Saradanandaji (*Great Master*). Explaining the Master's power of awakening the spirituality in others he writes on pp. 390–1: 'In that high state...the Universal I or what may be called the I of the divine Mother manifested itself through him as the spiritual teacher, possessing the power of bestowing grace and inflicting punishment.... He, like the mythical wish-fulfilling tree, then asked the devotee what he wanted...and again we saw him in that divine mood on January 1, 1886.' Sri Ramakrishna explains his divine role in the world (*Ibid.*, p. 862): 'As soon as they touch the Being who resides within it (his body)....' The Master used to bless the devotees 'by his extraordinarily potent touch in the state of divine semi-consciousness' (*Ibid.*, p. 890). All these indicate that it was the Divine Being which manifested in Sri Ramakrishna during such moments.

7. *Gospel*, p. 359.

8. *Gospel*, p. 798.

9. *Gospel*, p. 932.

nicate spirituality to others. Sri Chaitanya did the same thing when he exonerated Jagai and Madhai from their sins. Even Advaita Goswami, fifty years senior to him, received such benediction: Sri Chaitanya, in an ecstatic mood, placed both his feet on the old man's head.¹³

Interestingly, Haran Chandra had changed his family title from 'Baag' to 'Das'. The family tree shows that Haran Chandra and a few others of the family used the title 'Das' in place of 'Baag'. To explain this change, the family legend offers two versions. One suggests that soon after Haran Chandra met Sri Ramakrishna, he was so deeply impressed that he took a permanent refuge at his holy feet; he changed his title to 'Das' to impress on himself that he was a servant ('Das') of the Master. The second version claims that Haran Chandra's employer, a European, detested the word 'Baag' which meant tiger. To please his employer, he had changed his family title from 'Baag' to 'Das'. The second version seems more reasonable, for, Haran Chandra's nephew Govinda Chandra, who found employment in the same British firm, changed his family title in the same way.

Leaving their native village, Kshirpai in Midnapore, Haran Chandra's forefathers had shifted the family to a rented house in Suri Lane, Calcutta, and finally to Beliaghata — an eastern suburb of Calcutta. A childless maternal uncle of Haran Chandra had donated 9.5 cottahs (1 cottah = 720 sq. feet) of land at Beliaghata to Haran's mother with a proviso that she would have to take up the responsibility of worshipping daily his family deity, Devi Maṅgaḷā-caṇḍi. Accordingly, when Haran Chandra built a two-storeyed



Photo of Haran Chandra Das taken about the time he was blessed by Sri Ramakrishna

building, he set up a shrine for Devi Maṅgaḷā-caṇḍi in one room on the ground floor.¹⁴

Of two sons and ten daughters of Srimanta Baag, Haran Chandra was the second son, born in 1864. No reliable information regarding his formal education is available. But that he had some working knowledge and skill in English language, there is no doubt. He was employed in the office of Messrs Findlay Mayor Company. From the fairly big two-storeyed building¹⁵ he had put up, it can be safely presumed that his family income was more than moderate. Haran Chandra was fortunate in having in his wife, Manomohini, a pious soul. The couple had no issues but both of them took loving care of the joint family.¹⁶

It was 22 September 1884. *Caitanya-līlā*

13. *Sarva-bhūte antaryāmi Śrī Gaurāṅga Rāi; Caran tuliyā dilā Advaita māthāy.*

14. Five cottahs of land have since been registered as a *Debottar* Trust in favour of the family deity.

15. At present the house at 2 Kalitara Basu Lane, Calcutta 700 010, is in a dilapidated condition.

16. Materials regarding the family history were obtained from Shri Aniruddha Das (an 82-year-old grandson of Haran Chandra) and his wife.

at the Star Theatre had created a stir among Calcuttans. Like many others, Haran Chandra too had gone that day to see the theatrical performance. There he learnt perchance that Sri Ramakrishna had come to see the performance. Deeply impressed by the performance of the actors, Sri Ramakrishna had observed on this occasion, 'I found the representation the same as the reality.' Before he left the theatre, Haran managed to meet him and made prostration at his holy feet. This proved to be a turning point in the life of Haran Chandra. A young man with strong physique, simple habits, and a jovial nature, Haran Chandra found a new direction as it were.

His first impression of Sri Ramakrishna left a deep mark in the mind of Haran Chandra which changed his life in every way. In fact, from that moment, Sri Ramakrishna's influence began steadily gaining its hold upon him. He felt deeply attracted towards Sri Ramakrishna. He began to frequent Dakshineswar after his office hours. He met him at a few other places also. The charming spell of Sri Ramakrishna made him more and more drawn into spiritual life. His in-born devotion began to manifest and the image of Sri Ramakrishna became vivid in his heart even as a glass coated with silver nitrate retains the image of an object. He lingered in Sri Ramakrishna's presence as long as he could. He was often late in returning home and his elder brother, Babulal, rebuked him on this account, sometimes severely. Known to be level-headed, he tolerated the torment without a word of protest, even though tears rolled down his cheeks at times.

One day he was sitting in front of Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar. Devotional songs to the accompaniment of *khol* and cymbals created an atmosphere charged with devotion. An adept at playing *khol*, Haran Chandra desired within himself to



Photo of Haran Chandra Das in his advanced age

participate in the music by playing on the *khol*. Most unexpectedly, Sri Ramakrishna soon thereafter asked the person playing on the *khol* to pass on the *khol* to Haran. Struck dumb with wonder, Haran happily began to play on the *khol* to the satisfaction of all and certainly to his own satisfaction as well.

His interaction with Sri Ramakrishna reached a climax, which neither he nor for that matter any other devotee visiting Sri Ramakrishna anticipated or dreamt of even. As mentioned earlier, Sri Ramakrishna, in an ecstatic mood, blessed him by placing his feet on Haran Chandra's head. This gave him a profound spiritual experience and revolutionized his outlook. He became in-drawn and sombre.

To commemorate this remarkable blessing which had deeply influenced his life and work, Haran Chandra ceremoniously installed a picture of Sri Ramakrishna in his family shrine on Tuesday, 5 February 1889, being the day on which the worship of Goddess Saraswati was held that year in different parts of the city. As a part of the

(Continued on page 354)

Fight Against the Raj: Sister Nivedita and Lord Curzon

DR. MAMATA RAY & DR. ANIL BARAN RAY

Every cloud has its silver lining. The dark cloud that Lord Curzon was to India, certainly gave Nivedita ample opportunities for educating and rousing Indian public opinion against a tyrannical administration. The learned authors discuss in this article a few of the actions of Lord Curzon: (i) increasing government control as it was evident in the Municipality Act and the Universities Act, (ii) dividing the people on the basis of religion as evident in the Bodh-Gaya temple case, (iii) insulting the people of India by calling them untruthful, and (iv) partitioning Bengal for political advantages. Each of these was used by Sister Nivedita to bring about 'the unity of all children of one Motherland'. The direct actions in the form of boycott of foreign goods and the use of indigenous goods was the nation's bold step to rise against the British Raj in India.

At the call of her Master Swami Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita (born Margaret Elizabeth Noble in Ireland in 1867 and initiated as Sister Nivedita by Swami Vivekananda in March 1898) came to India in January 1898 and stayed on till she breathed her last on Indian soil at Darjeeling in October 1911. During the years of her association with India between 1898 and 1911, she made this country her very own and enriched all aspects of the national life with wholesome thoughts and activities in the spheres of education, religion, and politics. Beginning her work as an educator of women in India¹, Nivedita extended her educational work, especially since her Master's death in July 1902, to the whole nation, seeking to awaken it to a political fight against the British Raj of India, whose rule, in her opinion, produced

nothing but 'moral degradation' and 'despicable enervation'². She found the rationale for her politics in religion itself. The *Gita* provided for her the religio-philosophical basis of the fight against the British Raj. As she observes:

When one reads the *Gita* it means very little, apart from national condition. What a teeming multiform vitality necessitated such a philosophy.³

She was firmly of the opinion that the word *dharma* in the *Gita* should be translated as *national righteousness*. Notable is her rendering of verse 4.8 of the *Gita*:

For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evil, for the firm establishment of national righteousness, I am born again and again — so the great verse should be translated.⁴

'The *Gita* is to be read,' as Nivedita exhorted her fellow-Indians in a speech, 'from the dynamical point of view and for the purpose of material consolidation of your nationality.'⁵

From such an interpretation of the *Gita*

1. Nivedita opened a school for girls in the Baghbazar area of Calcutta in November 1898. Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi inaugurated the school on 13 November 1898 and blessed it along with Swami Vivekananda.

2. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, ed. Sankari Prasad Basu, (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1982), vol. 1, p. 447. [Hereafter *Letters*]

3. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 540.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Sister Nivedita's Lectures and Writings* (Cal-

it was but a step for Nivedita to reach the conclusion that India must recover her rights from her usurper, the modern Duryodhana in the form of the British. Thus conceptualising the fight against the British, Nivedita wielded her speech and pen equally actively against the British government of India. The Viceroy against whom she directed her 'fire power' most was Lord Curzon, the head of the British government of India from 1899 to 1905. The following is an account of Nivedita's fight against Curzon and his policies which she considered to be thoroughly anti-Indian.

I

Fight Against Educational Policy

Lord Curzon's efforts to 'officialize' the university education through a hand-picked body called the Universities Commission⁶ ran counter to the aspirations of the nationalists and wielding her pen on behalf of the nationalists, Nivedita offered the sharpest criticism ever against the educational policy

cutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1975), p. 340. [Hereafter *Lectures and Writings*]

6. The Commission was appointed in 1902. On the basis of its recommendations a Universities Act was passed in 1904 containing such illiberal provisions that the educated people all over the country registered their protest against it. According to Surendranath Banerjea, 'Of the many disservices that Lord Curzon had done to India, his so-called reform of the universities was the most far-reaching in its consequences. Under the plea of efficiency he had officialized the Calcutta Municipality; under the same plea he now proceeded to officialize the universities, and to bring the entire system of higher education under the control of Government. Efficiency was his watchword; popular sentiment counted for nothing, and in his mad worship of this fetish Lord Curzon set popular opinion at open defiance.' — *A Nation in the Making* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1931), p. 174.

of Curzon in the following terms:

We have had a Universities Commission lately, which has done its very best to kill all Education, and especially all Science Education.

This is the point in India's wrongs that fires me —

The right of India to be India.

The right of India to think for herself.

The right of India to *Knowledge*.

Were this not the great grievance, I might be fired by her right to bread — to justice — to other things — but this outweighs all.⁷

Nivedita was too constructive a thinker to criticize and condemn and leave the matter at that. When the Universities Bill was on the floor of the Legislative Council in 1904, she went on a tour of Bihar and the United Provinces mobilizing public opinion and exhorting people to think in the constructive alternative of *national* education, forsaking the attitude of looking always up to the Government for help. To quote from a report of her lecture delivered at Patna on 27 January 1904:

The educational policy which is now being followed gives everything but University Education. The Indian Universities Bill attempts to narrow the sphere of education in this country.... I have come here to help you in thinking out for yourself for I have a belief in the power of right thought....⁸

You must look at the educational policy of the Government in a transformed attitude. By the Bill before the Legislative Council many of the schools are to be disaffiliated and then will come your turn to sweep out the hypnotism of the past.... Disaffiliation will allow you much freedom of thought.... You must work, work and work and remake the

7. *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 540. Letter dated 28 January 1903.

8. *Lectures and Writings*, p. 336.

meaning of Education.⁹

Pointing out that the prevalent system of education was inappropriate in not being in touch with the national life, she asked:

What is the end of real education?... You must determine that knowledge should bring to you the idea that you are united, that you are one nation and that if you will you are quite able to make any power tremble before you. Strength and manhood are the secret of life....¹⁰

You must work with the idea of a united nationality. But how to get that idea? You must look upon your country as a whole, look upon it as a unity. If you cannot for yourselves appreciate the unity and oneness, a foreign lady's words would not make you feel it. You must not be actuated by a feeling of toleration but I want more from you. I want you to be the passionate debutants of that idea of oneness.¹¹

The political temper of Nivedita came out with the following utterance:

The Viceroy is a futile person.... A united people is able to cower a Government. The future lies with those who can act and no government can alter the destinies of those who can act. A unity of five men can for most purposes defeat a government.... You all know the good that comes out of the mutual benefit system.... Try to cooperate in new ways for new ends. *Your sphere must be the sphere of practical politics. It is for you to do and you should not crouch before the government like monkeys to get done by the government what you ought to do for yourself* (italics added) Let it be a fire burning behind you and driving you onwards to your work. During this transition period, the true power lies in you and in you alone.¹²

Elaborating the theme of self-help and

people's power, Nivedita writes in a letter dated 4 July 1904 to Miss MacLeod:

I cannot tell you how avenues of work are multiplying nor how the pressure upon the people, to deprive them of Education, is multiplying also. But if only we put our shoulders to the wheel, I have every hope that the attack of Government on thought will only succeed in driving knowledge deeper, and making it sounder and truer. I think this, because I believe that the people already have that minimum from which they cannot be dislodged. And if I am right, Lord Curzon will stand in history as the most anti-British influence that India ever saw.¹³

What effect did the constant campaign of Nivedita against Curzon's educational policy as reflected in his Universities Act (1904) have? The question is best answered in the words of Thompson and Garratt: 'University reform cannot be effective in the atmosphere of suspicion and resentment, and everyone combined to make the new Act inoperative.'¹⁴ It is needless to reiterate Nivedita's contribution towards making everybody combine in opposition to the Universities Act.

II

Fight Against Religious Policy

Nivedita and Curzon clashed again in the Bodh-Gaya temple case. For hundreds of years the temple was under the possession and management of Hindu Mohunts. In 1903 Anagarika Dharmapala demanded the restoration of the temple to Buddhists on the

12. Ibid., pp. 336-7.

13. *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 654. She also characterized Curzon's Simla speech on Education 'as the perfect tissue of lies'. Ibid., p. 756. Letter dated 20 September 1905.

14. Edward Thompson and G.T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of the British Rule in India* (Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1969), p. 573.

9. Ibid., p. 339.

10. Ibid., p. 338.

11. Ibid., p. 340.

ground that the shrine belonged rightfully to the Buddhists. The shrine contained a big stone image of Buddha, but its surroundings were in the main Hindu and not Buddhist. Lord Curzon paid a visit to the Bodh-Gaya shrine on 15 January 1903 in the company of Mr. Hore, Commissioner of Patna and Mr. Oldham, Collector of Gaya. Having inspected the shrine and questioned the Mohunt, he issued a 'Strictly Private and Confidential' note dated 18 January 1903 in which he suggested a solution to the dispute on the following line:

The main temple would become an exclusively Buddhist shrine. There would probably be no objection to Hindus visiting it, but they would not conduct worship there, or decorate the image or burn lights or spill ghee before it. The shrine would not be handed over to Buddhists as their property, since the Government had no desire to oust one proprietor merely to instal another, but would be held in trust by Government, who would issue regulations for the proper conduct of Buddhist worship there. The Bo-tree against the outer wall of the shrine would similarly be recognised as a place of peculiarly Buddhist sanctity, though there would be no objection to Hindus visiting (but not making offerings to) it. On the other hand, the larger Bo-tree in the platform would be reserved as an object of Hindu devotion. The remainder of the enclosure would remain open as it is now open to all parties. That the Mahanth would continue as ground landlord to draw the fees from all visitors whether Hindu or Buddhist.¹⁵

It is difficult to say how Nivedita got hold of this 'Strictly Private and Confidential' note of the Viceroy of India. But the fact that she managed to get a copy of the same was a measure of her resources and contacts

deep within the highly influential sections of the Government. The purpose behind getting hold of this *note* was to know in advance the way the Government was going to handle the Hindu-Buddhist controversy in the Bodh-Gaya temple case. It is obvious from the Viceroy's note that he was in favour of restoration of the shrine to the Buddhists, allowing Hindus only the right to *visit* but not the right to *worship* there. This was totally unacceptable to Sister Nivedita. To her, as it was to her Guru, Buddhism was not a religion separate from Hinduism. She considered Buddhism as an essential part of Hinduism. Echoing the words of her Master that 'from the high spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy ... to the lowest ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists, and the atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the Hindu's religion'¹⁶, she held that 'Hinduism is a synthesis, not a sect; a spiritual unity, not a spiritual sect; and of this synthesis Buddhism is an inalienable part.'¹⁷ Holding that 'Buddha was only a great Hindu teacher',¹⁸ she asserted, con-

16. Swami Vivekananda's Chicago Addresses as quoted in the *Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1982), vol. 1, p. 7. [Hereafter CWSN]

17. *Lectures and Writings*, p. 345.

18. Elaborating on this, Nivedita said:

Buddhism was at first not a new religion. Buddha was only a great Hindu teacher, higher and nobler than his contemporary Sadhus. His followers lived in the fold of Hindu society: they regarded themselves not as a new sect, but as Hindus of a purer life and more earnest faith than their neighbours; just as the followers of Ramakrishna have not ceded from Hindu society; they live in it, only they hold their Guru to be better than other Sadhus and teachers of the age.' Nivedita also denied that the extinction of Buddhism in India was due to Hindu persecution. She called that theory a

15. Lord Curzon's confidential note as found in *Letters*, vol. 2, pp. 609-10.

trary to Lord Curzon's suggested solution of the problem in terms of a differentiation between Hinduism and Buddhism, that 'Bodh-Gaya must be held for the great synthesis known as Hinduism. It must never become the play-thing of sects. Of this Hinduism, Buddhism, in all its phases, was an essential part.'¹⁹

Nivedita said the last word on Curzon's motive when she asserted that 'the idea that there was once in India two rival religions, known as Hinduism and Buddhism respectively, is a neat little European fiction, intended to affect Asiatic politics in the way that is dear to the European heart.'²⁰ Determined not to allow Curzon to play with Indian politics and Indian people in the way dear to his heart, Nivedita turned the Bodh-Gaya question into an issue of *national unity*. Opining that the temple of Buddha at Bodh-Gaya symbolized 'the recovery of the historic relation of the various parts of Hinduism'²¹, Nivedita observed further that the temple represented the heart of a perfect tangle of worship and protected the worship even of foreigners at the temple. To quote her:

All, therefore, that can be demanded is that one come in reverence, and the modern Hindu is as welcome at the altar itself as the most conservative of the orthodox. Not only do monks invite him to enter, but they feel responsible for feeding him, while he remains to worship. The fact makes Bodh-Gaya a great national as well as religious centre. The role that Puri aspired to play, and could not, has now fallen to her. Here, *all the children*

of India, even the disciples of the Prophet, may enter and offer salutation (italics added). For the heart of Buddha — was it not wide as the world? And shall the gates of his house be shut against any of His brethren?²²

It was but a step for Nivedita to move from words to deeds. She stirred up such public agitations against the move of Curzon towards restoring the temple to the Buddhists and thereby excluding the Hindus from their traditional worship at the temple that Curzon was forced to maintain the status quo. It would not be an exaggeration to say here that Curzon's efforts to create a division among the Indian people on the basis of religion were foiled by the sustained efforts of Nivedita towards making the Bodh-Gaya temple case an issue of national unity.²³

III

Fight Against Insinuation

Nivedita took on Curzon again after the latter, as Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, delivered a convocation address

22. Ibid., p. 198.

23. As Lizelle Reymond put it, 'Eventually, the "case" was settled by allowing Bodh-Gaya to remain in the hands of the Mohunt — the religious leader — as the heart of Hinduism; and when that happened the Mohunt sent Nivedita a vivid token, a *Vajra*, emblem of the Buddhist Thunderbolt. The gift was accompanied by a prayer: May you be an empty channel for His will to flow through....' — *The Dedicated* (Madras: Samata Books, 1985), p. 308.

Nivedita herself visited Bodh-Gaya in October 1904 in the distinguished company of Rabindranath Tagore, Jagadish Bose, Jadunath Sarkar and S.K. Ratcliffe. Reminiscing of this tour (one purpose of which was to bring the leaders of intellectual opinion into direct contact with the Mohunt), Nivedita wrote: 'I think it has been an event

'false history' and asserted on the authority of Prof. Cecil Bendal that Buddhism and Hinduism lived amicably together side by side in Northern India and that the former died of natural decay. See *Lectures and Writings*, p. 367.

19. Ibid., p. 346.

20. CWSN, vol. 4, p. 193.

21. Ibid., p. 197.

on 11 February 1905 in which he 'insulted the Indian people, by calling them untruthful'.²⁴ His exact words were the following:

Untruthfulness consists in saying or doing anything that gives an erroneous impression either of one's own character or of other people's conduct or the facts and incidents of life. I say that the highest ideal of truth is to a large extent a Western conception.

Undoubtedly, truth took a higher place in the moral codes of the West before it had been similarly honoured in the East. Flattery may be either honest or dishonest. Whichever it be, you should avoid it. If it is the former, it is nevertheless false, if it is the latter, it is vile.²⁵

Nivedita was so furious at the aspersion made on the character of the Indian people before an august gathering such as the one provided by the University Convocation that she, present at that moment in the audience, thought, immediately after the convocation was over, that a fitting reply must be given to Curzon. Surely, the man who lectured other people on truthfulness and flattery, had to be truthful, honest and unflattering himself. Nivedita quoted passages from Curzon's book *Problems of the Far East* to show how he, posted as a diplomat in Korea, *lied* to the Korean Foreign Office about his age, gave them *false impression* of the possibility of his being related in future through marriage to the Royal Family of England, and *flattered* them by telling them that his youthful look was due to his travelling for a month in the superb climate of

Korea. The exact passage in Curzon's book reads as follows:

Before proceeding to the royal audience, I enjoyed an interview with the President of the Korean Foreign Office. I remember some of his questions and answers. Having been particularly warned not to admit to him that I was only 32 years old, an age to which no respect attaches in Korea, when he put to me the straight question (invariably the first in an Oriental dialogue) 'How old are you?' I unhesitatingly responded 'Forty'. 'Dear me', he said, 'you look very young for that. How do you account for it?' 'By the fact', I replied, 'that I have been travelling for a month in a superb climate of His Majesty's dominions.'

Finally he said to me, 'I presume you are a near relative of Her Majesty, the Queen of England'. 'No', I replied, 'I am not'. But observing the look of disgust that passed over his countenance, I was fain to add, 'I am, however, as yet an unmarried man', with which unscrupulous suggestion I completely regained the old gentleman's favour.²⁶

Nivedita got the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* to publish the two matters — Curzon's convocation speech and his Korean interview — side by side in the issue of 13 February, to which *The Statesman* made the following incisive editorial comment on the following day: 'The pure fun which these two pictures have given in India and will ere long give in England was worth the whole performance.'²⁷

Nivedita was the author of the whole contrivance and yet none but a few intimate friends such as Dr. J.C. Bose were in the know of the real brain behind the piece which came out in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. Bose had the following to say on the snubbing administered to Curzon by Nivedita: 'I

in all our lives.... In the mornings we had tea by 6 and then readings — *Light of Asia* — *Web of Indian Life* etc., and the rest.' See *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 685. Letter dated 15 October 1904.

24. *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 721. Letter dated 16 February 1905.

25. Quoted in Atmaprana, *Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1961), p. 187.

26. Quoted in *ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*, p. 188.

do not wish that they should find out who wrote the article. The thunderbolt should always be behind dark clouds and they should not know from what part of the heavens the weapon is hurled.²⁸

Nivedita's 'fight' did not end with merely humiliating Curzon and teaching him a lesson. In an open letter to the editor of *The Statesman* published in the issue of 14 February 1905, she drew the attention of readers to the observations of Professor Max Muller made in his book *What India Has to Teach Us* to this effect that the highest ideal of truth owed its origin to the 'truthful character of the Hindus'.²⁹ In the same letter she chided the students of the Calcutta University for receiving the statement of Curzon in silence and for not showing the courage and manhood in rising to the defence of their nation and their ancestors. The chiding had its effects: a huge mass meeting was organized on 11 March at the Town Hall with Dr. Rashbehari Ghosh in the chair to register the protest against the Viceroy's convocation address. So, the one positive gain out of Curzon's convocation address was that a feeling of national consciousness had grown. The people would no longer take things lying down. They mustered courage now to face the wrong-doer and everybody knew who spurred them into action against a self-conceited Viceroy.

III

Fight Against the Partition of Bengal

Since assuming the Viceroyalty in 1898, Curzon followed two policies consistently — increasing government control as it was evident in the Municipality Act and the Universities Act and dividing people, preferably on the basis of religion, as it was evident in his attempt to drive a wedge between Hindus and Buddhists in the Bodh-Gaya temple case. Efficiency meant to him pursuing his policies ruthlessly, in total defiance

of popular sentiment and opinion. Nivedita mockingly said of him that Curzon was an able administrator and his ability lay in 'administering the law that is created on a basis of injustice'.³⁰ Nowhere was this more evident than in his announcement of the plan to partition Bengal on 20 July 1905, eventually made effective on 16 October 1905.

The official reason given was *administrative convenience*. Bengal with Bihar and Orissa included in it comprised an area of 1,89,000 square miles and a population of 78 million and it was, on the face of it, too unwieldy a province to be administered efficiently. A division was, therefore, an administrative necessity. A new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam was to be created by drawing a boundary line through Central Bengal. To win the Mohammedans of Eastern Bengal over the cause of Partition, Curzon assured them that the new province 'would invest the Mohammedans in Eastern Bengal with a unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of old Mussalman Viceroys and Kings'.³¹ As for Assam as a part of the new province, the Muslims of Eastern Bengal had nothing to fear from it because, as Curzon said, Assam 'would be an adjunct rather than the most prominent feature'.³² Curzon was careful enough to rope in the Nawab of Dacca (Salimullah Khan) 'by promising him a loan of Rs.1,00,000 at nominal interest and the latter had little difficulty in assembling a huge gathering of Muslims to cheer the Viceroy's plan for a Muslim province'.³³

Curzon sought to achieve three objec-

30. *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 540.

31. *Speeches by Lord Curzon of Kedleston*, vol. 3, address at Dacca, p. 303. Quoted in John R. MacLane, 'The Decision to Partition Bengal', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 2, No. 3, July 1965, p. 228.

32. Lovat Fraser, *India under Curzon and After* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1911), p. 381.

33. Amal Tripathi, *The Extremist Challenge* (Calcutta: Orient Longman, 1967), p. 97.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*

tives with one stroke of his Partition plan: to draw the Mohammedans of Eastern Bengal from the Hindus of Bengal; to reduce the Bengalis of the other province of Bengal into a minority by keeping the Hindi-speaking Bihar and Oriya-speaking Orissa attached to Bengal; and to punish Calcutta for the predominant role it played in nationalist politics. This third objective finds its most eloquent expression in the letter that Curzon wrote to Brodrick, the Secretary of State:

Its best wirepullers and its most frothy orators all reside here (in Calcutta). The perfection of their machinery and the tyranny which it enables them to exercise are truly remarkable. They dominate public opinion in Calcutta; they affect the High Court; they frighten the Local Government; and they are sometimes not without serious influence upon the Government of India. The whole of their activity is directed to creating an agency so powerful that they may one day be able to force a weak government to give them what they desire.³⁴

In the same letter Curzon acknowledged that:

Any measure in consequence that would divide the Bengali-speaking population that would permit independent centres of influence and activity grow up; that would dethrone Calcutta from its place as the centre of successful intrigue, or that would weaken the influence of the lawyer class, who have the entire organization [of Congress] in their hands is intensely and hotly resented by them.³⁵

The nationalist leaders of Bengal did

not fail to see through the ploy of Curzon. If Bengal as it was was so large and unwieldy then he could have given it a compact shape by taking Bihar and Orissa out of it and could have formed a new entirely Bengali-speaking province by adding to its Bengali-speaking parts the Bengali-speaking districts of Assam. They pointed out that Curzon would have none of this alternative proposal because his real reason was not 'administrative' but political³⁶: destroying the unity of Bengalis, dividing them on the basis of religion and reducing the importance of Calcutta by propping up Dacca as an alternative centre of influence. Nivedita concurred with the nationalist leaders that there was a fly in the British ointment and that Curzon must be resisted in his effort to destroy the unity of the people, in this case of Bengalis. The theme of *unity* found its most beautiful expression in a letter that Nivedita wrote on 16 October 1905 — the day the Partition was made effective in law — to Ramananda Chatterjee and this deserves to be quoted for the sheer beauty with which it speaks not only of the unity of the Bengali people but the unity of all children of one Motherland, that is, India:

36. Curzon himself acknowledged in his telegram to the Secretary of State that the partition plan was political. Alternative plans to relieve Bengal administration by setting up an administrative council or by detaching linguistically-distinct Bihar and Orissa (the ultimate 1911 solution) were repeatedly dismissed by him on political grounds — the latter proposal, he argued in a telegram to the Secretary of State who was sympathetic with the idea, 'would tend to consolidate the Bengali element by detaching it from outside factors, and would produce the very effect that we desire to avoid. The best guarantee of the political advantage of our proposal is its dislike by the Congress Party.' See Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885-1947* (Madras: Macmillan, 1983), p. 107.

34. *Correspondence with the Secretary of State, 1904-1905*, British Museum, pp. 51-2. Quoted in David Dilke, *Curzon in India* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1969), vol. 2, p. 202.

35. See Amalek Tripathi, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

To-day, being the 30th Aswin, 16th October, 1905, Partition of the Bengali people is to be made by law.

This day then, designed to be the date of our division, is henceforth yearly to be set aside by us, for the deeper realisation of our national unity. Having been made by this threat of division, overwhelmingly conscious of the essential oneness of the whole Indian Nation the heart of Bengal goes out to all parts of our common Motherland.

Thus to you from us of Bengal, is sent this thread of Rakhi-Bandhan, in token not merely of the union of Provinces and parts of Provinces but of the bond that knits us all as children of one Motherland together. Bande Mataram.³⁷

With the necessity of realizing the unity of their hearts, the nationalist leaders now set their hearts upon devising the means that must be adopted to join issue with Curzon. There were enough of prayer and protest meetings. A man who was a dictator by temperament could not be swayed by these means. Something more compelling was necessary. And this was found in the direct action in the form of boycott (of British goods) and *Swadeshi* (use of indigenous or Indian-made goods) — the weapons which, taken together, constituted what came to be known in the annals of history as the *Swadeshi* movement of Bengal. The boycott was meant to hurt the fortunes of British merchants, British economic interests, so to say, and the *Swadeshi* was designed to promote the development of indigenous industries³⁸ by increasing the demand for home

production.

Nivedita saw in boycott and *Swadeshi* a source of national power:

India appears to be waking up in these days. The incubus of Curzon is off.... No one knows where it [the boycott] may all end. For the people are feeling their power. I think Curzon has broken the British Empire.³⁹

In an extraordinarily powerful letter written on 20 September 1905, to her friend G.K. Gokhale,⁴⁰ an Indian member of the Vice-Council, Nivedita explained just why she

Swadeshi Thought, in Atul Gupta (ed.), *Studies in the Bengal Renaissance* (Jadavpur: The National Council of Education, 1958), p. 208. Among the objectives of the Hindu Mela were the following: 'The manufacture and use of indigenous products, encouragement to the growth and use of national language, and the development of physique of the nation's manhood for a persistent struggle against foreign domination.'

39. *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 755. Letter dated 13 September 1905.

40. Nivedita's purpose in writing to Gokhale was to get him to issue a public denial of the rumour that he gave his opinion in favour of the Partition of Bengal. Nivedita wrote to Gokhale in the following terms: 'A rumour has been started here, it is said by the authorities — that you gave your opinion in favour of Partition. We of course know that this is not true — but it is being used to cause such a soreness, that a categorical denial published over your own signature would be an admirable step. Is it possible that any of the European members of the Council could have consulted you and that you could have said anything tentative, which would be liable to the said misconstruction? Even if you did, it would still be open to you to write asserting that the will of the people should be supreme with regard to their own interests in this matter.' *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 757.

We know from Nivedita's letter dated

37. *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 1274.

38. It should be noted that 'the manufacture and use of indigenous products' which constituted the heart of *Swadeshi* was advocated as early as 1867 in Bengal in the Hindu Mela which owed its origin mainly to the initiative of the Tagore family of Bengal. See Soumyendranath Tagore, 'Evaluation of

did consider the *Swadeshi* movement as great in giving people a sense of the power of their unity and in creating a spirit of sacrifice among them. Holding that 'the will of the people should be supreme with regard to their own interests'⁴¹, Nivedita opined that it is the will of the people which Curzon flouted in going through with his plan of partition.

V

To sum up, Nivedita traces the genesis of unrest in Bengal to Curzon's policies. 'My view is', observes Nivedita, 'that it was the Education Bill that did the work — the Convocation Speech that roused the spirit — and Partition that opened the war'⁴². Recalling 'the constant aggression upon liberty'⁴³, characteristic of Curzon's regime, Nivedita observes: 'This man Curzon seems the incar-

nation of insolence and evil'⁴⁴. Calling Curzon 'a fool'⁴⁵ for his dictatorial temperament, his inability to use power by suggestion and his constant habit of riding roughshod over Indian opinion, Nivedita observes: 'A good rider would know when to make positive love to his horse. But all hours are hours with this man for hit and spur'⁴⁶. 'Every measure' that Curzon took was, in Nivedita's opinion, most 'oppressive and tyrannical, and aimed at undermining of the faculty for liberty'⁴⁷. All in all, Nivedita's judgement of Curzon was that he was a 'dreadful Viceroy'⁴⁸.

A constructive thinker not to remain satisfied with merely expressing her opinions, Nivedita carried on sustained campaigns against Curzon's anti-Indian policies which had the effect, as we have noted in this article, of educating and rousing as well the Indian public opinion against a tyrannical administration. □

1 November 1905 addressed to Gokhale that Gokhale wrote back to tell her that the rumour that he gave his opinion in favour of the Partition of Bengal was 'a calumny'. See *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 759.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid., p. 974. Letter dated 24 June 1909.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., p. 647. Letter written on Wednesday in Easter week, 1904.

48. Ibid., p. 540. Letter dated 28 January 1903.

41. Ibid., p. 757.

42. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 935.

43. Ibid., p. 726. Letter dated 5 March 1905.

Meditation

SUJATHA PADMANABHAN*

A million thought waves arise in my mind
And beat against the shores of life.
Tumbling, tumultuous waters roll,
As the ocean-giant roars.

Yet, deep within I know there lies,
A hidden calm, a hidden quiet
As the Spirit, in inner reflection
Rises high towards realms of perfection. □

* The author, from Madras, has contributed poems to *Prabuddha Bharata* in the past.

Mind According to the East and the West

DR. RAMAKRISHNARAO VETURY

(Continued from the previous issue)

Other Indian Systems

The Upaniṣadic position on the mind formed the basis for the views of the different systems of Indian philosophy which have only added new and more elaborate ideas on the topic. Dasgupta writes:

Buddhism did not probably start with the same kind of division of matter and mind as we do now. And it may not be out of place to mention that such an opposition and duality were found neither in the Upaniṣads nor in the Sāṃkhya system which is regarded by some as pre-Buddhistic.⁴⁴

We shall look at various Indian systems of philosophy starting with Buddhism.

Buddhism

In Buddhism, the idiom, *nāma-rūpa*, is more elaborated upon as the elements of individuality. In the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (iii.86) it is clearly stated that *nāma* answers to the mental and *rūpa* to the physical features. What manifests itself to the senses is *rūpa*. In *Milinda* (2.8), it is explained that *nāma* and *rūpa* are closely connected and the two spring together, being intimately connected with each other. There is no *nāma* without *rūpa* and vice versa. If we see a friend, we immediately remember his name, and if his name is mentioned to us in his absence even, we recall to our mind his features. The two

are inextricably linked together. This mutual dependence of *nāma* and *rūpa* is compared to the yolk and the shell of an egg which is produced by the hen as a single unit. The name and form, therefore, spring together in mind and senses and this means that the mind and the body are mutually dependent.⁴⁵ 'The Buddhists along with Indian psychologists in general, believe in the material or organic nature of mind or *manas*.'⁴⁶

The Nyāya

The *Nyāya* speculation on mind are summarized by Radhakrishnan. The *Nyāya* adopts the Upaniṣadic conclusions based on the experience of absent-minded people. The *Nyāya-Bhāṣya* (1.1.4) clearly states that 'The operation of the *manas* is necessary in every act of perception.'⁴⁷

The Atomicity of the Mind

Manas is in contact with one sense organ at a time and though a quick succession of impressions gives a wrong impression of simultaneity, in fact, acts of knowledge are successive and not simultaneous. The analogy given is that of a pin piercing a sheaf of papers. In actual operation, one sheet after another is pierced. This makes mind corpuscular in structure and it jumps from one organ to another to collect the impressions gathered by them. As soon as a sense gets into contact with the object, (Gautama,) the

44. S.N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 1. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), p. 95. [Hereafter, *History, Indian Philosophy*].

45. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, vol. 1 (Bombay: Blackie and Sons Publishers Ltd., 1983), p. 399. [Hereafter, *Indian Philosophy*].

46. Ibid., p. 400.

47. *Indian Philosophy*, vol. 2, p. 50.

mind jumps to that sense with 'lightning speed'⁴⁸, to convey the cognition to the all-pervading self. Therefore, mind mediates between the self and the senses. This atomicity of the mind is an additional information on mind, over the Upaniṣadic position of mind cooperating with the senses in the process of perception.

Mind as a Sense Organ

Vātsyāyana includes mind under the senses, the inner sense taking care of feelings, desires and cognition. This is a reiteration of the Upaniṣadic position. 'The self perceives the inner states through the instrumentality of the *manas*, while the cooperation of the senses is necessary for the apprehension of the outer non-subjective states.'⁴⁹ 'Vātsyāyana clearly states that *manas* is as good a sense organ as the eye and the like, though there are marked differences. The outer senses are made of material substances and are earmarked for specific faculties, while mind is immaterial and effective on all objects: both subjective and objective. Uddyotakara agrees only with the universal action of *manas* and single action of other senses. He compares *manas* with the self in being the substratum of all contact.'⁵⁰

Nyāya, therefore, has gone a few steps further than the Upaniṣads, while agreeing with their basic conclusions. The internal differences between various Nyāya thinkers on minor details are not of importance to the basic issue. There is unanimity on the interdependence of mind and body without giving rise to mind-body problem.

Sāṃkhya-yoga

The Organic Nature of Mind and Body

'The material or organic nature of mind' is clearly brought out in the Sāṃkhya doctrine of evolution. Mind is a coevolute

from *ālaṃkāra* along with the five sense organs and the five motor organs of the body and the five *tannātras* leading to the atoms of the gross bodies in the external world. *Ālaṃkāra* itself is a second stage evolute from *Prakṛti* which consists of the *triguṇas*, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The three *guṇas* are the common material cause of all evolutes from *Prakṛti*. Only, each evolute has its own collocations and preponderances of the *guṇas*. The methane gas (CH₄) and the benzene liquid (C₆H₆) are both made of atoms of carbon (C) and hydrogen (H) but the proportion and bonding of C and H are different in each, leading to totally different properties of the products. The preponderance of one or the other of the *triguṇas* makes for the difference between the mind and the external world. The basic stuff of both is the same, namely, the *triguṇas*. 'Thus, thought and matter are made up of three elements—intelligence stuff (*sattva*), energy stuff (*rajas*) and mass stuff (*tamas*). Of these, the last two are predominant in gross matter, and the first two in thought.'⁵¹ As coevolutes from a common source, mind cannot be derived from matter nor matter from mind.⁵² It is worthwhile noting that both thought and matter have the energy stuff predominant as a common factor.

The Psychic Functions

The special psychic functions of the mind are also attributed to the influence of *Puruṣa* on the mind. The eleven *indriyas* (including the mind), the *ālaṃkāra* and the *buddhi* constitute the psychic apparatus for the *Puruṣa* helping the *jīva* to gain experiences.⁵³

Mind as an Organ

In Sāṃkhya also the mind is treated as an organ. It synthesises sense data into per-

48. Ibid., p. 50.

49. Ibid., p. 51.

50. Ibid., p. 52.

51. *History, Indian Philosophy*, p. 242.

52. M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* (Bombay: Blackie and Sons Publishers Ltd., 1983), p. 283.

53. Ibid., p. 284.

ceptions and dictates appropriate actions to the motor organs. 'Manas is said to be the doorkeeper, while the senses are regarded as doors.'⁵⁴ Mind is made up of parts as it is connected with the senses.⁵⁵

Mind and Senses

The cooperation of the *manas* is necessary for both perception and action.⁵⁶ *Caraka Samhitā* which gives an earlier version of Sāṃkhya also expresses the same view that mind must cooperate with the senses for their action.⁵⁷ This view is identical with the Upaniṣadic position.

Interdependence

The interdependence of the body and the psychic system is clearly brought out in Sāṃkhya (*Sāṃkhya Kārikā*, 30; *Tattvakaumudī*, 30): The actions of different functions is successive though some occur so rapidly as to give the impression of simultaneity. 'When we see a tiger on a dark night, one's senses are excited, mind reflects, *ahamkāra* identifies and the *buddhi* determines the nature of the object and we run away to save our lives. All this happens so rapidly that we think that seeing and running are simultaneous. When we see someone in the night, suspect him to be a thief, and slowly make up our minds to move away in the opposite direction, the different stages can be more easily identified.'⁵⁸ This chain of stimuli—responses is definitely identified to be successive.

The Yogic Practices

Yoga recommends some practices for self-perfection which indicate the mutual dependence of body and mind. It treats the human body as an integrated system of physical body, vital force, psychic principles

and the *Puruṣa*. The body and mind are closely connected. 'The body is the instrument for expression of spiritual life. So, instead of renouncing the material basis, yoga accepts it as a part of the spiritual problem.'⁵⁹ The eight-fold method of yoga consists of: *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. Of these, the last three are stages in mental control and can be achieved only after the control of the senses. Why should *āsana*, the sitting posture, be the preparatory ground for mental control? Obviously, because of the deep-rooted connection between the discomfort of the body and the distraction of the mind. In fact, the connection is integrated with the ethical preparation through *yama* and *niyama*. In the human system, the physical and mental activities are inextricably linked and have to be controlled progressively.

Thus in Sāṃkhya and Yoga also, the mind and the body are closely connected and there is no mind-body problem.

Conclusion

Thus, we see in general that the Indian systems of philosophy did not face the mind-body problem. It is not because they failed to study in depth the mind and the body. On the other hand, it has been so because the study has been quite thorough though based on very obvious and simple observations. Quite early in the Upaniṣads, the seers have recorded the simple observation: 'My mind is elsewhere, I did not see....' They realized that all perception is with the mind. This set the pattern of thought and whatever has been added by the different systems of philosophies was by way of improvement and sophistication. One is tempted to speculate and remark: Had Descartes taken this simple and clear observation into consideration, probably he might

54. *Indian Philosophy*, vol. 2, p. 270.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 270.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 270.

57. *History, Indian Philosophy*, p. 213.

58. *Indian Philosophy*, vol. 2, p. 295.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 352.

have not created the mind-body problem in western philosophy. But then, we have to remember that the Cartesian dualism is a

derivative of the soul-body dualism found in the Christian theology and in the Greek philosophy of Plato and the Orphics. □

Haran Chandra Das

(Continued from page 340)

festival, devotional songs were sung for twenty-four hours. Reading from the holy *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* for a whole month was an added attraction. Devotees in large numbers attended the festival and rejoiced. Since that day, this festival is being held every year. However, the reading from the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* had to be discontinued after Haran Chandra's passing away. Members of the Baag family proudly recall that Swami Vivekananda, in the company of Sister Nivedita, had graced this occasion on 18 February 1899.¹⁷

The passing away of Sri Ramakrishna was a terrible blow to Haran Chandra. This and other events of his life, grim and painful as they sometimes were, drove him to surrender at the feet of the Lord. He did not make pilgrimages, did not practise austerity, nor study stout scriptures. All he did was praising the glories of God, adoring God and giving Him his heart-felt love.

As age advanced, Haran Chandra's devotion became mature and steady. Sri Ramakrishna became his all in all. By way of illustration, we quote the following episode. Late one night he woke up feeling an acute pain from a sore throat. He sensed that something might have gone wrong in the shrine. Accompanied by some members of

the family he entered the shrine and in the dim light he saw that the Master's bed had become wet. There had been a heavy shower in the night, and Haran surmised that a gust of wet air coming through an open window must have been the culprit. The bed was immediately changed and only then could Haran Chandra retire to bed with a peaceful mind.

As expected, Haran Chandra sought the company of devotees when his body became rather incapacitated due to illness. He began to visit the Sri Ramakrishna Yogodyan at Kankurgachhi where a portion of the sacred remains of Sri Ramakrishna had been interred on 23 August 1886. He was first and always a devotee of God. His life, which was like a lamp of devotion glowing brightly, bespoke the glory of his Master. Its flame shone till it succumbed to 'a blast of the wind of death' in 1916. He was only fifty-two then.

Haran Chandra stands out as a brilliant example of how the divine touch of Sri Ramakrishna literally brought about marvellous transformation in the lives of apparently ordinary men like him.* □

17. It is quite probable but there is no documentary evidence either in favour of this claim or against it.

* The author is grateful to Satrajit Dasgupta, Sachin Das, Gautam Gupta, Krishnendu Neogi and Parthasarathi Neogi for collecting materials which form the basis of this write-up.

On the Bane of Fanaticism

DR. PRABHAKAR BHATTACHARYYA

The author summarizes in this article some of Swami Vivekananda's views on fanaticism as a source of disruption to smooth functioning of civilized society. Dr. Bhattacharyya is of greater Calcutta.

Unlike, perhaps, our impression of traditional saints, Swami Vivekananda was an extremely enthusiastic person, one who tried his best to bring about total uplift of Indian society in all aspects. Though an ardent patriot of India; he would not hesitate to point out our national inertia and weakness in our national character. He was a man of many contrasts. Inspiring people by his oratory, writings and spiritual instruction, at the same time, he warned about excessive enthusiasm which might arise from the religious upheaval that was sweeping the country after his return from the West. On his northward tour and homeward journey, at Madurai, he said: 'In the meanwhile, in India there is a tremendous revival of religion. There is danger ahead as well as glory; for revival sometimes breeds fanaticism, sometimes goes to the extreme, so that often it is not even in the power of those who start the revival to control it when it has gone beyond a certain length. It is better, therefore, to be forewarned.'¹

The Swami did not merely point out the danger of fanaticism, he analysed the psychology of it, exposed its roots, and suggested some remedies. He believed that the motives of populist religious leaders are always suspect who encourage emotional excitement and fanatical feelings. These people do not understand the power and prac-

tice of patience. Further, like common men they crave power, fame and wealth, and have sympathy for only a section of society. But the real benefactor of humanity is one who keeps in his focus the welfare of all sections of the people. Not only tolerance and respect for others, but acceptance and love for them is his great characteristic. He aspires truly for the spiritual development of all.

One characteristic feature of fanaticism, Vivekananda observed, is that it snatches away the power of judgement in the individual. Devoid of the power of judgement the fanatic is a weak individual. He often lapses into dependence on others for decisions. Weak and fearful himself (though a vigorous opportunist), a fanatic cannot judge whether a particular course of action is an appropriate one. He is an incendiary who inclines to shield himself behind his mob of followers and condones the mob's use of force and violence to pursue their cherished dream. Ultimately, the fanatic and the mob defeat their own interests.

Fanaticism works against integrity of character. A man of integrated personality will not be a fanatic because he has controlled his mind and body and is at peace. The fanatic is one-sided and inflammatory and prone to perform actions which a balanced man could never imagine himself doing. Both the love and the hatred of the fanatic get expressed in extreme forms. Further, fanatical love can never be gentle, or sublime, or at peace with itself. It is always impetuous, aggressive and possessive. A fanatic

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 3, p. 172.

destroys whatever good relations he may have with others so that he can possess and control things. Those things may be loved persons, persons of high authority or material wealth, or position and power.

Fanatics can never cooperate or live peacefully with others unless forced by circumstances to do so. Psychologically insecure, they always feel threatened and try to make others feel that way. They are afraid of losing their object of love. Beyond the pale of the fraternity of those who share their religious or ideological views, they cannot open their mind to consider others' deep-felt desires, needs or ideas. Swamiji observed:

...the fanatic loses all power of judgment. Personal considerations are in his case of such absorbing interest that to him it is no question at all what a man says—whether it is right or wrong; but the one thing he is always particularly careful to know is who says it. The same man who is kind, good, honest, and loving to people of his own opinion, will not hesitate to do the vilest deeds when they are directed against persons beyond the pale of his own religious brotherhood.²

Religious bodies are often accused of fanning the flames of fanaticism. Vivekananda acknowledged that some traders of religion have made fanatics of common people to serve their own interests. The world knows, a religious dogma can be forced upon a country by fanatical violence, but the difference between religious dogma or belief, and unitive spiritual consciousness should always be recognized. Religious ideas preached through force of fanaticism cannot bring much lasting help to people. Its process is, overall, iconoclastic and destructive. The growth of spiritual consciousness on the other hand is a slow process.

According to Swami Vivekananda, the worshippers of the lowest class, those who

worship God or deities out of fear of punishment here or hereafter, or who cherish worldly desires, often become fanatics. The fanatic seeks the safety of an organization, a religious sect or fraternity. He often thinks his most important work is to extend the influence of this exclusive group by bringing people into its fold and for this he uses enticements, threats and propaganda. As a last resort, he mixes up political motives with religious symbolism and proceeds under the banner of religion. Of course, religion loses its character and charitable activities become mere eyewash. So Vivekananda said, the emotional side of religious life must be balanced with discrimination and knowledge about what is good and bad and the proper goal to be achieved. A person who overcomes and completely controls emotion and sentimentality may then reach the level of spiritual love or *parābhakti*. The Swami said:

...this danger [of fanaticism] exists only in that stage of Bhakti which is called the *preparatory* (Gauni). When Bhakti has become ripe and has passed into that form which is called the *supreme* (Para), no more is there any fear of these hideous manifestations of fanaticism; that soul which is overpowered by this higher form of Bhakti is too near the God of Love to become an instrument for the diffusion of hatred.³

In spite of being a great social reformer, Vivekananda did not believe that improvement of the world is the goal of human life. To him society (like the world) is a dog's curly tail which can never be fully straightened. Its very nature is to remain crooked. Assuredly, he said, we must work for the good of the world, but ultimately we ourselves are the beneficiaries. The result of work rightly performed is purification of our own mind and heart (*cittaśuddhi*), the

2. Ibid., p. 33.

3. Ibid.

prerequisite for the liberation of the soul.

Vivekananda scorns those garrulous professors of religion who do not have deep convictions. The uneducated and young are misled by them. And he observed with great regret that the intelligentsia is more interested in keeping up a public image than in finding out and establishing truth. So he said, '...even some of the biggest professors you hear of are arrant cowards and dare not say, for fear of public opinion, a hundredth part of what they hold to be really true in religious matters.'⁴

Swamiji did not point to professors alone, but also to the preachers, priests and fundamentalists who earn their loaf and luxury by deceiving innocent people. The truth is that Vivekananda scorned hypocrisy in all departments of life and called for whole-hearted sincerity from everyone. Even mere instructors in religious and other studies in schools and colleges must be sincere and committed to their vocations, for those institutions of higher learning are run by and for the public, at public expense. Sometimes gently and firmly, but sometimes with strong and flaming words he exhorted the narrow-minded and faint-hearted to shake off bigotry and cowardliness and rededicate themselves to the service of the nation.

According to him, civilized life and fanaticism can never go hand in hand. A necessary condition for the growth of any civilization is the absence of fanaticism. Without sympathy for others, without mutual give and take, no civilization can reach for higher spiritual values or grasp them. Therefore he said:

...the world is waiting for this grand idea of universal toleration. It will be a great acquisition to civilization. Nay, no civilization can long exist unless this idea enters into it. No civilization can grow unless fanaticism, bloodshed, and brutality stop.⁵

Vivekananda pointed out the dilemma in following the path of *bhakti* exclusively. Though *bhakti*, love directed to God, is the easiest and most natural way to attain liberation, unless *bhakti* is perfectly sincere, there will surely be the danger of its degenerating into fanaticism. Singleness of attachment (*niṣṭhā*) towards the beloved is at the root of developing genuine love. He observes that very often such attachment to a particular object or ideal causes denunciation of everything else. The devotee learns to love by hating the objects of others' love! This tendency is observed in cases of weak and undeveloped minds. Thus Swamiji observed that fanatics in all religious sects rise from those who follow only the rituals and ceremonies of religion, the lower plane of 'unripe' *bhakti*.

Vivekananda noticed that it is the lack of spiritual outlook of the reformers that renders their ends self-defeating. No action is possible which is purely good and devoid of all trace of evil. And no time will ever come when the world will be without evil. Good and evil are both in *māyā*, always dependent on the restricted individual viewpoint or in case of groups, the individual group outlook. From the absolute spiritual standpoint of the perfect Brahman, all reforms are meaningless perhaps, but at the preparatory stage, social reforms and all other good works have an educative value since, performed without selfish attachment (*karma-yoga*), they delink the chains of *māyā*, and purify the mind and heart, the container of worldly impressions or *saṁskāras*. Both good and evil are chains, the one of gold and the other of iron. In essence, the human being is one with the Absolute, beyond good and evil. The supreme goal of life *sans* fanaticism is to realize by direct experience this great fact. □

4. Ibid., p. 187.

5. Ibid.

Blessed Doubt, The Harbinger of Light Divine

SWAMI TATTWAVIDANANDA

The scientific approach of collecting sense data, analysing it, classifying it and interpreting data to give meaningful information has not met with much success. Science is one, but takes various forms. So too does the ultimate Truth Itself. It requires a good measure of intellectual acumen, humility and determined effort to transcend multiplicity, to seek to know the One knowing which all else is known.

The author, an acharya in the Probationers' Training Centre at Ramakrishna Math, Belur, analyses sage Aruni's approach to impart this vidya to his pupil-son, Svetaketu.

'A wise scepticism is the first attribute of a good critic'—as the saying goes. Scepticism normally finds expression in doubts and misgivings. But it is not always foolish, to be belittled and discouraged outright. More often than not it opens up new avenues to explore and brings us nearer to truth.

The sixth chapter of the *Chhandogya Upanishad* relates an episode of one Svetaketu who went to his *gurukula* (preceptor's house) for studying Vedic lore and ancient scriptures. He spent there twelve long years learning these and rendering devoted service to his preceptor. At the end of his term of study he returned home, a changed man. Ironically, the studies had contributed a lot to develop some negative attributes in him, which immediately drew the attention of his father and he was stunned. Learning breeds modesty. But Svetaketu's father, Aruni, was surprised to see his son puffed up with pride and vanity instead. Actually, through studies he had merely stuffed his brain with some information which did not bring about the genuine spiritual transformation in him that it ought to have affected. As the story goes, he had studied all the Vedas and Upanishads which are the storehouse of spiritual wisdom—even the assimilation of a little of which in one's life can open the floodgates of spiritual knowledge innate in every man. The father was swept off his feet

by love for his son. An accomplished teacher, he immediately and rightly diagnosed the fault in the pupil-son. He could understand that the ego-snake that had raised its hood inside his son was due to his ignorance about the Truth which the Vedas embody. He took pity on Svetaketu and set himself to enlightening him.

Egotism is a disease in a person which cannot be got rid of simply by being chastised for this—a well-meaning person only makes a deeper dent on the person's ego. It can be removed only by pointing out the fact that there is something higher and grander than one takes pride in knowing and having. Hence, we find Aruni asking a fundamental question to his arrogant son so that the light of higher values may dawn upon him and cleanse him of that formidable virus called ego. Aruni queried, 'My dear boy, why do you look so grave and disrespectful? Why are you proud of your Vedic learning? Did you ever seek after that lesson that may lead to supreme Knowledge?' A startling, pointed query indeed!

Svetaketu was taken aback to hear these words because in the *gurukula* he had undergone the whole course of studies for a long span of twelve years and therefore nothing was presumably unknown to him for which his father should make such an

observation. So unyielding was his observation! His bewilderment knew no bounds when his father spoke eloquently about the teaching he was inquiring of: 'Through which what is unheard becomes heard, what is unthought of becomes thought of, what is unknown becomes known'. On being asked the nature of that teaching, Aruni says that by knowing It (the Cause), every manifestation of It (the effects) can be known. Svetaketu must have been surprised: 'How can there be such a thing the knowledge of which can supply the knowledge of every other thing?' He had not understood that the effect was non-different from the cause.

There is nothing in this entire universe which can bear testimony to this. Countless are the worldly objects and these are all shrouded in ignorance. That we can at least know some of them implies this fact. Knowledge always presupposes ignorance. Hence, ignorance or *ajnana* is a legitimate concept postulated in Vedanta philosophy.

According to Advaita Vedanta, *ajnana* is directly intuited by all, by the witness-self or *sakshi chaitanya*. The *sakshi* is so called because it can reveal things without any mediation and while remaining uninvolved in the perception of anything. *Ajnana*, however, is said to be intuited by *sakshi* since the modal consciousness or *vritti jnana* which reveals all worldly objects cannot reveal *ajnana* being antagonistic to *ajnana*. Two things which are in opposition cannot reveal one another. Therefore, we are to accept something which has the capacity to reveal *ajnana*, and but for *chaitanya* is there anything in this world which can reveal *ajnana*? The Pure Spiritual Consciousness called *chit* cannot reveal *ajnana* as it is the principle of revelation and not the revealer. The *sakshi* or revealer has an activity of revealing which Pure Consciousness, being pure, does not have. It is therefore that *sakshi chaitanya* intuitively *ajnana*. There are proofs for *ajnana* char-

acterized by positivity, causality, etc. However, *ajnana* has some positivity only from the empirical point of view. Brahman alone is positive or real in the true sense of the term.

Since *ajnana* is dispelled by knowledge some, like the Naiyayikas, are tempted to brand it as 'negation of knowledge'. But this is not true. The word knowledge or *jnana* denotes (i) Brahman in the primary sense, as declared in the Upanishads, and (ii) *vritti jnana* secondarily. Firstly, *ajnana* cannot be absence of *vritti jnana* for, according to the Advaitins (followers of non-dualistic Vedanta), a person's mind gets suffused with an object which is presented to it through sense contact or otherwise. This state is known as *antahkarana vritti*. When this *vritti* with the light of Consciousness reflected upon it reveals the object by removing the veil of ignorance that covers it, then alone the knowledge of that particular object arises. This is known as *vritti jnana* or modal consciousness in Advaitic parlance. In the states like deep sleep, etc. modal consciousness is absent because the mind ceases to function during those states. But during those states also, knowledge in the form of *sakshi chaitanya* exists. In deep sleep too we 'know'. And, for this, a knower is necessary, i.e., then too the Pure Consciousness characterized as witness is present. Pure Consciousness can never be a knower. *Ajnana* in the sense of absence of Brahman (which the word *jnana* denotes primarily), is also equally impossible, because it is the underlying Reality of the world phenomena. Hence, *ajnana* in no way means the absence of knowledge. We have, therefore, to admit that *ajnana* is something positive. But for *ajnana*, our study of science, philosophy, literature, etc. would have been in vain. Such studies shed the light of knowledge that removes our ignorance pertaining to them. And since such studies deal with a good many subjects and acquiring knowledge of

them means removal of respective ignorance, we are led to accept that ignorance is many and this strictly conforms to our worldly understanding. Hence, the doubt cropped up in the mind of Svetaketu as to how knowledge of one thing could remove ignorance of everything, and he encountered a general resistance to this idea when he faced such a challenging question from his father—'Did you ask for that knowledge which would make you all-knowing?' Since worldly objects are many, the knowledge of one thing cannot give rise to the knowledge of all and thus the point Svetaketu's father asked about, sounded absurd to his son.

It is interesting to note that Svetaketu's doubt was not that abominable as to obscure the light of Truth peeping through the inner recesses of his mind. He doubted it surely, but he did not dismiss it in the first instance. He was a real Doubting Thomas unrelenting in his efforts to know the truth by repeated questioning.

In order to remove every doubt from his son's mind and being actuated by compassion towards him, we find Aruni tacitly introducing the theory of causality, much talked about in philosophy, exploring which alone the topic raised by Svetaketu's father can be best understood. It seems that Aruni wanted to solve the riddle his son was encountering by denying the difference among worldly objects and showing non-difference between worldly objects (called effects) and their Cause (Brahman). The difference persisting in worldly objects is not logically viable and hence unintelligible and false from the ultimate point of view. Two alternatives may be suggested in reply to one's question—'What is difference?' Difference may either be the very nature of the object whose difference is posited. Or, it may be an attribute of the object concerned. In the first place, difference cannot constitute the very nature of the object. Had difference been so

constituted, it would have been known along with the thing in question. But this runs counter to our experience. When a jar is known, it is not known as different from a piece of cloth. Further, difference cannot be an attribute either. If an attribute, it must be different from the thing which is substantive. And in order to understand their relation another difference has to be admitted which will lead to infinite regress. The statement—'the cloth is different from the pot'—calls forth a prior knowledge of cloth and pot as characterized by clothness and potness called universal, respectively. Such knowledge of particular things qualified by their universals requires previous knowledge of their difference. Thus there is mutual dependence. We are therefore led to admit that difference is unintelligible.

There are different theories prevalent in Indian philosophy about causality. What Aruni emphasizes here in this connection is: The cause alone is real and the effect is false. It is mere name and has no existence independent of the cause. He cites a series of examples to Svetaketu to drive home this idea. These are the examples: clod and earthen pots; gold ingot and ornaments; iron and appliances, etc. The examples invariably suggest that the material cause does not undergo any change whatsoever when it is called by a name different from it. An earthen pot is in no way different from a lump of clay which is in it through and through. This, of course, does not imply that the pot was latent in the lump and some efforts had brought it out. Because, what is called pot is actually clay that has assumed a particular form which goes by that name. Being perishable, name and form can never be real in the true sense of the term. It is preposterous to think that something which is entirely distinct from the pot has given rise to a pot. Further, an earthen pot cannot be an entirely new thing as it was implicit in its material cause, clay. Had it not been so, it

would not have arisen from clay. However, it is not unreal nor a chemical notion. It is a utility item; we can make use of it. We are, therefore, led to admit that what we call an effect or product arising from a cause is actually false, i.e., inexplicable either as real or as unreal. It is real, seeing that it exists. It is not real, because it is non-eternal. Reality is eternal and what is non-eternal is not real. Words fail to specify what exactly an effect is. Remaining essentially one with its material cause, it appears differently.

From this it transpires that the cause alone is true and its awareness is tantamount to the knowledge of all its products. For example, when one comes to know what clay or gold is, one invariably knows everything made out of each. In this connection we are to bear this in mind that material cause is of two types. There is one type of material cause which undergoes thorough changes when something arises out of it, e.g., milk turning into curd. Another variety of material cause remains constant even though giving rise to other things. In this case, cause and effect belong to two orders of reality. And since the effect is no real transformation of the cause, it is taken to be an appearance only. Snake-rope, silver-nacre illusions illustrate this fact.

In the light of what we have discussed above, we can grapple with the problem put forth by Svetaketu's father. The burden of his question, as we have already pointed out, is: Is there anything knowing which one can be omniscient? Initially the question baffles us most. Our mind with its non-spiritual upbringing gets baffled even to think of such a Reality, not to speak of accepting It. Because, in order to accept It, we have to make this fundamental presupposition that the world phenomena, the diversity, have a single cause or essence at their back. Such a philosophical presupposition may appear to be recklessly utopian. But the Upan-

ishadic seers, even in the remote past, had presented a worldview which is an arduous challenge to the hi-tech present-day world.

Modern science with its phenomenal advancement has triggered off a knowledge explosion. It has provided a wonderful opportunity to scientifically oriented people to broaden their horizon to the utmost limit. But however enormous the quantum of scientific truths discovered till date, it has hardly made any breakthrough in the spiritual Truth. Scientific truths are many, but spiritual Truth is one and It alone sheds light on the scientific truths making their revelation possible, claim the Upanishads. The Upanishads describe It as the basis of all knowledge—*sarvavidyapratishtha*. Science may keep discovering new truths but its enquiry will never come to an end until and unless it finds out the ultimate Reality which is appearing as the multifarious universe. The endeavour of material science to know the ultimate Truth by probes and experimentation will never be crowned with success since the Reality intuitively known and experienced by the Vedic seers of the past and their followers even of the present, is a spiritual entity. The Reality has to be spiritual as It must be eternal or non-perishable. What is non-eternal or perishable is not real. The snake that appears on the locus of a rope is not real as it ceases to exist when light is brought to bear on the scene. Anything material is non-eternal. Moreover, matter is not self-conscious. Its existence is certified by Consciousness. So Consciousness is the presupposition of anything material. Thus matter becomes dependant on Consciousness. But Consciousness is not dependant on matter as It is self-certified. Dependant matter is not real (being not self-certified) as it has to depend on Consciousness which alone is eternal. No material means can unravel the mystery of the Reality. Hence, the question put by Aruni has a spiritual dimension alone.

We have already pointed out that ignorance covers the Reality and, since Reality is one, ignorance also has to be one. Ignorance may be of different objects and consequently people may think that ignorance is different. But as the concept of difference is unintelligible, as we have already pointed out, ignorance cannot be many. As the Reality is one, ignorance also is one. The one ignorance exists only in the one Reality as there is no other real locus at all. Ignorance as many is called *tulavidya* and as one is called *mulavidya*. *Tulavidyas* are but many states of the one and the same *mulavidya*.

Now we are in a position to understand what actually incited the doubt to crop up in Svetaketu's mind and the possible antidote that dispelled it. The cause of doubt, as we have already mentioned, is the general notion that *ajnana* is many and there is no single thing in this universe whose knowledge can make us all-knowing. But when we are convinced of the fact that *ajnana* is one and it can be removed by the light of knowledge—an Upanishadic teaching—, no such doubt can arise at all. It is by accepting the oneness of ignorance and the diverse universe as an appearance of Brahman that we are favourably disposed to show our allegiance to the fact that by knowing the One, one can be all-knowing. When ignorance is removed by the knowledge supreme called Brahman, then alone the instructions Svetaketu's father asked about will make sense.

The question—If ignorance is one, why

does not the removal of one's ignorance bring spiritual liberation to all?—does not hold good. Ignorance is no doubt one but it may have different manifestations in myriad individuals. When the ignorance of a particular man is removed, ignorance in a particular embodied form is dispelled. But ignorance in other forms, in other individuals, still remains and hence one's liberation does not mean the liberation of all. Here it will not be out of place to mention that according to another standpoint the individual self is one, even as ignorance is one. Other individuals are but imaginations of that one individual self.

The Upanishads are called *mokshasastras*—scriptures dealing with our salvation. Svetaketu was accosted by an odd question. His father asked him that uncomfortable question in order to humble his supercilious attitude. But that was only on the surface. Being an Upanishadic seer, parental obligations urged him to proceed further to teach his son the supreme Truth. It is spiritual knowledge alone that brings us face to face with Truth, and in rediscovering one's kinship or identification with It lies one's salvation. In this article we have endeavoured to present the philosophical implications of that seminal question asked by Aruni to his son, from the standpoint of non-dualistic Vedanta. The implications are, however, not exhaustive. There are other dimensions to the problem. This brief article skims through only the surface of the topic. □

Knowledge related to the outer world is false. True knowledge dawns within [in the pure mind]. Realize Brahman, which is the innermost of the inner self. It is like water [milk] within the kernel of the coconut.

As one sees the moon as only one and very bright on the full moon night, so one should perceive Brahman as one and luminous. Dualistic vision comes from false perception.

—Avadhuta Gita, II.20–21

Bhagavad-Gītā: The Three Guṇas

DR. P.V. NARAYANA SWAMY

In this article, the learned author from Bangalore, shows that the three guṇas bind man to the world. How to transcend them, and what the characteristics of such a man are, are brought out in the light of the fourteenth chapter of the Bhagavad-Gītā.

In the thirteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the distinction between the body and the Atman was highlighted. The lack of perception of this distinction is not merely through want of discrimination but also due to the lack of self-control. In śloka 21 of that chapter, Sri Krishna had made a mention about attachment to the *guṇas*. In every Jiva, Nature or Prakṛti is, as it were, a twisted rope with three strands in the form of the three *guṇas*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The fourteenth chapter of the *Gītā* is complimentary to the thirteenth and follows as a natural and cogent sequel. Attainment of *Brahma jñāna* is hardest to come by, especially for those who are immersed in *saṁsāra*. To make the comprehension easier, Sri Krishna reiterates the idea from a different angle of approach, particularly because the limitations of *kṣetra* are often attributed to *kṣetrajñā* through grievous ignorance.

Sattva is perforce to be based on scriptural injunctions and Vedic dicta which are calculated to update one's super-sensuous knowledge and subject our understanding to an acid test on the anvil of experience. Doubts have necessarily to be cleared in the light of *Śruti* (knowledge traditionally handed down), *yukti* (logical analysis through contemplation), meditation and *anubhava* (practical experience). The *Kenopaniṣad*¹ highlights this idea thus:

*Tasyai tapo damaḥ karṁeti pratiṣṭhā
Vedāḥ sarvāṅgāni satyamāyatanam. (IV.8)*

[In regard to that secret teaching of Brahman,] austerity, self-control, and rites are the

support. The Vedas are its limbs and truth is its abode.

Man inevitably has links binding him to his parents, preceptors, and the like. Though these are fundamental, he is often-times unaware of them. At such times, the 'eye of wisdom' (*jñāna-cakṣu*, chapter 13, śloka 34) comes to his rescue. The 'eye of wisdom' and the 'liberation from the tentacles of the *guṇas*' (*bhūta prakṛti mokṣa*, chapter 13, śloka 35), constitute the obverse and the reverse of the same coin. Bhagavan Sri Krishna has explained in chapter 14 how the former helps in achieving the latter. Thus, this chapter is a self-evident corollary to what was taught in chapter thirteen. The 'eye of wisdom' should perceive in the arena of apparent activity the illuminator behind all actions. The stress is on *kṣetra* for performing actions, and on *kṣetrajñā* for realizing the non-dual Reality transcending all names and forms.

Everyone is born of the union between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. Thus, the cause for all Jivas to come into being is the same; however, the consequences are different. This is because, the three ingredients of *prakṛti*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—occur in different proportions in individuals. *Sattva* illumines, *rajas* leads to activity and bondage, and *tamas* characterizes dullness and inertia. Thus, if *sattva* predominates with *rajas* taking a second place and *tamas* the back seat, the person concerned has a contemplative nature.

The four broad groupings or *varṇas* (classes) can be depicted as follows:

1. *Kenopaniṣad*, IV.8.

a) *Brahmana: Sattva*

Sattva is preponderant, *rajas* is also present, while *tamas* is the least.

b) *Kshatriya: Rajas (1)*

Rajas dominates, *sattva* occupies the second place, *tamas* is also present.

c) *Vaisya: Rajas (2)*

Rajas is uppermost, *tamas* occupies second place, *sattva* is minimal.

d) *Sudra: Tamas*

Tamas is maximum, *rajas* in trace amounts, *sattva* conspicuously absent.

This categorization is based on characteristics and has nothing to do with birth or parentage. After all, everybody is by birth a *sudra* and it is his spiritual evolution that lifts him up to a *brahmana* in the ultimate analysis:

*Jaumanā jāyate śūdraḥ
Sanskārāt dvija ucyate.*²

Furthermore, the three moods intermittently hold sway over everybody so that one is sometimes contemplative, sometimes active, and at other times dull.

The union between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* in the macro-dimension gives rise to *hiranya-garbha* (Golden Egg), the Cosmic embodied Being and from this emerge infinite varieties of *jīvātmās*. The womb of *prakṛti* is multifarious and variegated giving scope for all types of beings to issue forth. Sri Krishna underscores this aspect when He says, 'I (Brahman) am the Cosmic father.'

The Trinity—Brahma, Vishnu and Siva—not only typify creation, preservation and annihilation respectively, but also symbolize the three *gunas*—*sattva* (Vishnu, the preserver), *rajas* (Brahma, the creator), and *tamas* (Siva, the destroyer). In substance *prakṛti* may be one, but its effect is three-fold, namely *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The unfettered Atman gets bound as it were through ignorance. No doubt, the soul of Jiva is a spark of the divine and despite the bondage with *gunas* is *avyaya* (changeless) and *anādi*

(beginningless). Its evolution continues through aeons of time 'until the origin, alpha, and the final consummation, omega, coincide.'³

Many obstacles crop up in the pursuit because of *vāsanās* (desires) attributable to experiences in previous births occasioned by *tamas*. One has to steer clear of temptations. *Rajas* engenders insatiable ambitions, ceaseless activity with attendant restlessness and sorrow. One should build a protective cloak of *sattva* to ward off the effects of both *tamas* and *rajas*. In the ultimate step even *sattva* has to be crossed over.

When a person is endowed with *sattva*, the light of knowledge illumines his *buddhi*, determinative faculty. An analogy can bring out this concept in sharp focus. Consider a glass casing made with glasses of different hues. A lamp inside will radiate rays of coloured light. In a like manner, the intellect of one with predominance of *sattva* reflects best the light of the Self. In such a case, one's understanding is perfect. One becomes an alert and efficient performer of all actions which is the true hallmark of a real *karmayogi*. In fine, *sattva* may be said to be pure, unsullied stainlessness. A person who dies while in a *sattvic* state attains the world of the wise. The result of *sattva*-hood is happiness and knowledge. However, it binds with the feeling, 'I am happy'.

Rajas is characterized by limitless ambition, giving rise to perpetual activity, not unmarred by excessive greed. Man in a *rajasic* state is thus extremely agitated and impatient. Thus greed, continuous activity and consequent mental agitation constitute *rajasic* moods. The results of *rajasic* temperaments are desire, a strong attachment to work and an even stronger attachment to the fruits of work. The end result of *rajasic* influence is pain and repeated birth in the world of men. Karma Yoga with special emphasis

3. Dr. Radhakrishnan, *Bhagavad-Gita*, 2nd edn., (Bombay: Blackie & Son (India) Ltd., 1977), p. 316.

2. *Manu Smṛti*, 1.31.

on adhering to *svadharma* advocated by the *Gītā* saves a rajasic person since *rajas* gets no occasion to taint such a person.

Tamas is marked by down-right laziness, extreme sloth, heedlessness and excessive sleep. The direct results of *tamas* are inadvertence and prevarication, a woeful lack of discrimination and total delusion. Such a person, after death, is reborn among lower forms of life like animals, etc. The end result of *tamas* is ignorance.

As a progressive movement towards enriching our own spiritual outlook, *tamas* should be overcome by *rajas*, and *rajas* in turn subdued by *sattva*. However, in the process one should not become bound to *sattva*. One should not cultivate the ego of being of a sattvic temperament. On the other hand, a sattvic behaviour should become one's second nature, absolutely spontaneous and marked by unostentatiousness. It should be remembered that *sattva* also can generate desires, though for laudable purposes. Being sattvic represents a stage beyond which one should go and become *triguṇātīta*, one who is beyond the three *guṇas*.

This is best illustrated in the parable of three robbers told by Sri Ramakrishna:⁴

Once a man was going through a forest, when three robbers fell upon him and robbed him of all his possessions. One of the robbers said, 'What is the use of keeping this man alive?' So saying, he was about to kill him with his sword, when the second robber interrupted him, saying: 'Oh, no! What is the use of killing him? Tie him hand and foot and leave him here.' The robbers bound his hands and feet and went away. After a while the third robber returned and said to the man: 'Ah, I am sorry. Are you hurt? I will release you from your bonds.' After setting the man free, the thief said: 'Come

with me. I will take you to the public highway.' After a long time they reached the road. Then the robber said: 'Follow this road. Over there is your house.' At this the man said: 'Sir, you have been very good to me. Come with me to my house.' 'Oh, no!' the robber replied. 'I can't go there. The police will know it.'

This world itself is the forest. The three robbers prowling here are *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. It is they that rob a man of the Knowledge of Truth. *Tamas* wants to destroy him. *Rajas* binds him to the world. But *sattva* rescues him from the clutches of *rajas* and *tamas*. Under the protection of *sattva*, man is rescued from anger, passion, and the other evil effects of *tamas*. Further, *sattva* loosens the bonds of the world. But *sattva* also is a robber. It cannot give him the ultimate Knowledge of Truth, though it shows him the road leading to the Supreme Abode of God. Setting him on the path, *sattva* tells him: 'Look yonder. There is your home.' Even *sattva* is far away from the Knowledge of Brahman.

One who has thus gone beyond the *guṇas* attains a state wherein one gains nothing by observance of norms and loses nothing by abandoning of rules. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa with his characteristic flair for parables, said:⁵ 'The kingfisher dives deep to catch fish. It does not get wet in the process, and the few drops of water on its water-repellent feathers are shaken off easily.'

A Jnani is supremely indifferent to the world and its happenings. The trait of character of a *triguṇātīta* beautifully listed by Sri Krishna in *ślokas* 22 onwards of chapter 14 are strikingly similar to those of a *sthita-prajña* (chapter 2, *ślokas* 55 to 72). These traits are:

(Continued on next page)

4. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1994), pp. 267-8.

5. Swami Chidbhavananda, *Bhagavad-Gita*, 2nd edn., 1967, p. 743.

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

The Central Committee for Ramakrishna Mission Centenary Celebrations organized an international seminar on 'Vedanta: Concepts and Applications' at the **Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta** from 26 to 30 December 1997. Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, Vice President of the Ramakrishna Order, inaugurated the seminar and Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, gave the keynote address. Twenty-three scholars from the East and the West presented papers followed by lively discussion among the participants. The concluding programme held on 30 December afternoon was open to the public and was presided over by Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj.

The **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Chennai**, conducted convention for boys and girls of Higher Secondary Schools on 22 and 23 Novem-

ber respectively, in which a total of 382 students from 36 schools took part.

PLATINUM JUBILEE CELEBRATION: RAMAKRISHNA MISSION VIDYAPITH

The final phase of the Platinum Jubilee Celebration was held from 8 to 11 November, 1997. Messages from Most Revered President Maharaj and Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj were read out and a souvenir brought out on the occasion was released. The function, inaugurated by Swami Srikanandanandaji Maharaj, was presided over by Sri Krishnanand Jha, a former minister of the Government of Bihar. Several cultural programmes were also organized in this connection. The function was attended by a large number of students, teachers, local citizens, ex-students and monastic members of the Ramakrishna Order.

E-MAIL AND WORLD WIDE WEB

The Vedanta Society of Portland, U.S.A., has an E-Mail connection whose address is vedanta@cyberhighway.net, and a site on the World Wide Web at www.vedantasociety.org. □

Bhagavad-Gita: The Three Gunas

(Continued from previous page)

- a) He does not have any abhorrence for the *gunas* when the light of knowledge (*sattva*), activity (*rajas*) or delusion (*tamas*) are experienced; nor does he crave for them when they are absent.
- b) He is supremely immune to the influence of *gunas* and is untainted by them. Being conscious that *gunas* inexorably operate, he remains resolute, firm as a rock, and unshakable in his determination to remain unaffected by them.
- c) He possesses an equipoise of mind, which does not waver in prosperity or adversity, pleasure or pain, fame or infamy, respect or ridicule, love or hatred. He is neither elated by success nor dejected by failure. He behaves alike towards friends and foes. Revelling forever

in his own 'self' he considers alike a clod of earth, a piece of stone, and a nugget of gold—as gross matter possessing no intrinsic worth.

- d) He avoids all (motivated) undertakings.
- e) He has an unwavering bhakti with which he serves Him (the Lord) with true devotion in a one-pointed, sincere and systematic manner.

Ślokas 26 and 27 highlight how through unswerving yoga of devotion one transcends the three *gunas* and qualifies for Liberation, for, the Personal God is indeed the abode of Brahman—the indestructible (*amṛta*), immutable (*avyaya*), the eternal (*śāśvata*), the Dharma and unalloyed Bliss (*aikāntika sukha*). □

Reviews and Notices

THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE REAL IN
MACBETH: Jagodish Purkayastha; publ.
Jagodish Purkayastha, Streamlet Road,
Laban, Shillong 793 004, Meghalaya;
1994; pp. 186 + xi; price not stated.

A play is meant to be *staged* — rather than read. But then it has to be read before it can be put on the stage. In fact, repeated, particularly when the play concerned is as complex as Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, reading facilitates its understanding, and, to that extent, improves its performance on the stage.

Jagodish Purkayastha, however, argues for the suspension of critical analysis till the first reading is over. The text is best read with an open mind to begin with. The poetic vision, such as that of Shakespeare in his tragedies, expresses itself through some external features. One's initial approach to the work should be through these external features, e.g. the word-order, images, symbols, etc. Critical analysis, which does enhance appreciation, should come later.

True, drama is basically concerned with stage performance. But with Shakespeare, as with many other playwrights, the performance must reflect the poetic vision that the text embodies. This explains why reading and viewing enrich each other. Purkayastha asserts that the 'more we understand the spirit of the text, the better will be our dramatic performance'. In fact, but for a close reading of the text, he could not have brought out the undertone of spirituality in *Macbeth*.

Purkayastha views the supernatural evil in *Macbeth* as having emerged from 'the inner sphere of cosmos', confronts Macbeth and Banquo, 'two human beings', but leaves only the former, the protagonist, tempted, confused and ambivalent, 'leading to an overall atmosphere of contraction, intermittent, bloody, secret crimes and as a consequence the organisation of the state suffers a sharply qualitative degeneration, disorganisation'.

Macbeth is faced with an existential crisis of his being — 'So foul and fair a day I have not seen'. Consequently, when the opportunity of getting Duncan out of the way presents itself, he cannot bring himself to seize it. But once Lady Macbeth has goaded him on to the act, he is on his own. Thereafter, he inexorably hardens as a criminal, and finally fights and dies as the

usurper king of Scotland. The eventuality reminds Purkayastha of the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

*Even death is better while performing
one's duty;*

The duty of another is fraught with fear.

Duncan faithfully discharged his duty as a king; so, despite being brutally done to death, he is 'sent to peace' all right. Macbeth, on the other hand, by becoming a king, actually usurps *the duty of another*, only to lose 'peace' — in addition to the 'golden opinions', which he achieved earlier in faithful discharge of his duty as a subject to the just king and, therefore, to God Himself. In the event, he has subjected the state which he now unlawfully rules to his own 'Boundless intemperance'.

Thus debased, Macbeth, who was sometime 'Bellona's bridegroom', now relies on the totally unreliable prophecies of the Witches, whom Banquo has unmistakably identified as an abomination. Macbeth predictably drifts towards an ignominious end.

True, in his fight with Macbeth, Malcolm pays a heavy price, but his victory has been certain, for he is up against an evil force. Young Siward dies in harness, but his bereaved father can at least commend his soul to heaven with words such as these:

Why, then god's soldier be he!

and

And so, God be with him!

Once Macbeth is dead and gone, the 'fear of oppression and tyranny,' as Purkayastha remarks, now over the consciousness of time, so long tortured by the image of oppression is now free. The 'snares of watchful tyranny' are no longer there. It is the sense of proportion, closely linked with justice, appropriateness of time and of place, that will accompany royal administrative measures. Malcolm invokes 'the grace of God' that will attend the initiatives towards the restoration of peace and order in Scotland:

Malcolm: and what needful else

That calls upon us, by the grace of Grace,

We will perform in measure, time and place.

Purkayastha's discussion of Shakespeare's handling of time and place is illuminating.

Expectedly, some of the ground covered by Purkayastha has been covered by numbers of post-Bradleyites before him, but his originality lies in his thesis, which he convincingly proves, that increasing materialism will disable us to appreciate great tragedies that pivot on an interaction between the supernatural and the real. For

the 'more mechanical we are', says Purkayastha, the more obtuse shall we be to a cosmic tragedy like *Macbeth*, which is predicated upon an interaction between 'human situations and natural or cosmic phenomenon'.

A grim warning, indeed! The students of spirituality have a point to make there.

Prof. Sunanda Sanyal, Calcutta

A DICTIONARY OF ADVAITA VEDANTA; Swami Harshananda; publ. Ramakrishna Math, Bull Temple Road, Bangalore 560 019, Karnataka; 1995; Pages 100; Rs. 20/-.

Though there are several works which deal with the conceptual presuppositions of the Advaita Vedanta, this small book by Swami Harshananda appears to be the shortest and gives a lucid account of the philosophically balanced explanations of the Vedantic terminology. It must be said to the author's credit that he has studied, nay, assimilated the entire literature available on the subject. The well-planned list of charts/tables constituting the last part of the book is really very useful. The swami has also given a brief account of Sadananda's *Vedāntasāra* in the Appendix. The author of the book under review is not a *śuśka śāstrākāra*, he is a *siddha*. This much is proved when we find him saying, '...our philosophical treatises which keep before us the *paramapuruṣārtha* give as much importance to *sādhana* as to intellectual speculation.... The *rṣis* (sages) "saw" the Highest Truth, experienced not only the nature of that Truth but also the path that leads to It' (p. 81). So, the book is the outcome of a serious research as well as deep *sādhana*, and must find a place in all the libraries.

Dr. Priyavrat Shukla, Jabalpur

A BRIEF STUDY OF THE BRAHMA-SŪTRAS; Swami Harshananda; publ. Ramakrishna Math, Bull Temple Road, Bangalore 560 019, Karnataka; June 1995; Pages 56; Rs. 6/-.

The Vedanta philosophy has attracted many contemporary minds, even scientifically oriented ones. A fresh and lucid introduction to the study of the characteristically abstruse *śāstras* of the Vedantic tradition is the need that the book under review meets. In its comprehensive approach the brochure deals with the sources of Vedanta, a synopsis of the *Brahma-Sūtras*, a summary account of the important schools of the

Vedantic thought and the exponents of different Vedantic *vādas*. The last part of the brochure comprises a list of commentaries and sub-commentaries. In such a short span the work is not, and it cannot be, exhaustive; never-the-less it is more than satisfactory. Thus, the book under review is a welcome addition to the serious works on Vedantic thought and tradition. Till date we have not come across another work on Vedanta in general and *Brahma-Sūtras* in particular which is so brief in its presentation/form and yet so comprehensive in its thought-content.

Dr. Priyavrat Shukla

YOGA OF PATAÑJALI: A BRIEF SURVEY; Swami Harshananda; publ. Ramakrishna Math, Bull Temple Road, Bangalore 560 019, Karnataka; 1995; Pages 40; Rs. 5/-.

The yoga tradition of meditation offers profound and effective methods for the sublimation, tranquillity and clarity of mind. The present short work under review is a great contribution by Swami Harshananda to the existing literature of yoga as applied spiritual philosophy. The brochure comprises two essays on yoga which are complimentary to each other. In the first essay on the 'Attainment of Yoga: Maladies and Remedies', the author has discussed 'peace of mind'—its significance and meaning, and the 'obstacles and impediments'. The approach of the author is somewhat definitional as well as inspiring. He closes part one of the work with the optimistic note: 'Hence the immensity or intensity of the obstacles should bestir the yogic aspirants to even greater efforts and more dogged persistence instead of dampening their spirits' (p. 23). The second essay comprises the swami's thought on 'Meditation According to Patañjali'. While discussing human nature, the author states that man 'always seeks for short cuts' (p. 29). Regarding 'devotion' and 'self-surrender to God' (*Īśvarapraṇidhāna*) the author remarks that Patañjali has proposed this method for those who are 'averse to hard and sustained effort' (p. 29). Devotion and self-surrender have been clearly shown to be the 'short cuts'. It does not appear to be a sound and balanced interpretation of the Yoga Sūtra.

The earnest hope of the author which he expresses in his address to the reader (last page) deserves fulfilment. This work will rouse the reader's curiosity to know more on this basic text of yoga.

Dr. Priyavrat Shukla